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*The Art of Music:*  
*The voice and vocal music*

Daniel Gregory Mason









# **THE ART OF MUSIC**



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# The Voice and Vocal Music

EDITED BY

ROBERT C. STRONG

Acoustical Engineer, U. S. Navy

AND

WILLIAM KEENE, *Editorial Assistant*

Acoustical Engineer, U. S. Navy

Introduced by

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STANDARD

AMERICAN SOCIETY OF MECHANICAL ENGINEERS





**Saint Cecilia**

*After the painting by Rubens (Kaiser-Friedrich Museum, Berlin)*

**THE ART OF MUSIC: VOLUME FIVE**

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# **The Voice and Vocal Music**

**Department Editors:**

**DAVID C. TAYLOR**

*Author of 'The Psychology of Singing,' etc.*

**AND**

**HIRAM KELLY MODERWELL**

*Musical Correspondent, Boston Evening Transcript, etc.*

*Author of 'The Theatre of Today,' etc.*

**Introduction by**

**DAVID BISPHAM, LL.D.**



**NEW YORK**

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# THE VOICE AND VOCAL MUSIC

## INTRODUCTION

**ALL** the Arts, being emanations from the superman, are of the highest significance to the human race therapeutically—the word being used in its broadest possible significance. They are curative, they do us good. There is happily no longer a ban put upon any one of them in the modern world, except by an occasional religious sect, and even those survivors of a prohibitory past are rapidly disappearing.

Enough can scarcely be said of the value of the literature of song as it exists to-day. Whatever has been written or is yet to appear, is a natural growth, and should be recognized as welling up from the unsounded depths of the human mind, as something to be used for the benefit, here and now, of young and old, male and female, rich and poor, well and ill—as a fruit ‘for the healing of the nations.’ When performed under proper circumstances, music—and particularly song, because it is so individual—has a power for good that is amazing. But this is not generally recognized; only by poets and dreamers has it been stated. The words of such are accepted by the world at large as beautiful generalizations, having no immediate or personal significance, applicable to some realm of fancy, some Celtic fairyland, as impossible as an Oriental heaven, but not to the sombre facts of existence upon this earth—facts so discordant that none but a prophet could by any stretch of the imagination reconcile them with a life of har-

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## THE VOICE AND VOCAL MUSIC

mony here. Personally I believe in the foresight of the prophets and poets, and hope that Science will ere long come forward to set the seal of authority upon their utterances. When this is done, song will be accorded the position that so justly belongs to it, and its place will not be an inferior one in the scheme of man's development through savagery into civilization, and beyond. The seers spoke better than we know; they saw, and do see, through the veil of the present into the beyond, through the paradoxical Paradise of parable into the theoretical perfection in which the effort to attain practical results will be one of the chiefest of joys. Is it not wonderful to realize that music and song are so prominent in the utterances of these hitherto misunderstood soothsayers? *Truth-sayers* are they in sooth!

There is a noble work to be done in the endeavor to bring about sensibly, systematically and scientifically, the realization of their visions as they pertain to music, and a recognition of the value of song and singing and the application of this beautiful and all but universal gift to the betterment of conditions both personal and social.

To the musical enthusiast society seems to be divided into two classes: those who are musical and those who are not. The fact remains, however, that every normal person is musical to a certain degree, though some may believe it of themselves more readily than others believe it of them. To paraphrase Shakespeare, some are born musical, some achieve music, but all should have music thrust upon them. In one way or another, everyone should be educated in music, to the degree at least of knowing from childhood about it and its makers, being able to participate in musical performance, or at least to appreciate the performance of others, for the musical gift is a fundamental part of human nature; but unfortunately the vast majority of people seem to be unaware of the importance and value of this precious

## INTRODUCTION

possession, which has indeed by too many come to be considered as a mere source of amusement, and not as a thing to be taken seriously.

We have now reached a period when all music, and particularly singing, should receive most careful consideration. The voice is so intimate a thing that no one can avoid it in himself or escape it in others, and so great is its power when properly used, whether in speech or song, that it is amazing that its qualities are not more fully realized by all educators and treated accordingly. But up to the present time it seems that those who have influence in educational matters have not had their eyes opened to the fact that every human being should be taught to speak properly and to sing as well as may be, and that these things are perfectly easy of accomplishment, if only correct models are put before children as they grow up. Languages, the most difficult to acquire by adults, are learned by children with perfect ease from those with whom they come into contact; they will speak them well or ill, according as they have heard others speak. In short, example is, where voice is concerned, better than precept; and the ear, so intimately associated with everything vocal, should be given more to do than has hitherto been considered necessary either in schools or by private teachers. While most young people do not begin to take singing lessons until their voices are reasonably settled and can bear the strain of study, it does not seem incompatible with the dictates of common sense to say that the training of voices, as of bodies and minds, may be undertaken much earlier than has generally been thought advisable. 'The precious morning hours' of youth are too often shamefully wasted; in them this natural and beautiful gift should be brought out. Vocal music should be learned by ear as well as by eye, pieces suited to varying vocal capacities and wisely selected by those competent to choose should be taught, while cer-

## THE VOICE AND VOCAL MUSIC

tain of the musical masterpieces should be made familiar to all.

This seems so obvious as to be hardly worth saying, but as a matter of fact, song is by too many looked upon merely as a luxury to be enjoyed by the few, whereas it is in reality a necessity that should be used by all, for all have not only a latent impulse toward vocal expression, but much more of a natural gift than is usually granted. Persons selected for the purity of their enunciation and beauty of their voices should every day, in all schools, speak and sing to the pupils, who in turn would unconsciously imitate what they heard; and so there would grow a regard for purity and beauty of tone, both in speech and in song, which later would find expression in the study of the various branches of vocal music—from folk-song to the art-song, from sacred music and oratorio to opera. Only those especially gifted should be permitted by their masters to take up the profession of singer or teacher of singing, and thus there would be selected from the great field of those who know much the few specialists in this or that phase of the art who know more, and who are by nature better fitted to exercise their talents in public.

So many people are able to sing after a fashion that sufficient care is not always taken to separate those who are entitled to enter with joy into the ranks of the interpreters of song from those who are fit only for the comparative outer darkness of the auditor. But if that be darkness, how great is the light of those who, by common consent, are adjudged competent to bear so glorious a lamp before the footsteps of the world!

The desire to sing is so universal that many enthusiasts overlook the fact that they have neglected to train their vocal apparatus until it is too late to make serious study worth while. Little can then be done beyond what will give pleasure to the individual himself. But

## INTRODUCTION

this universal desire to sing should be universally recognized. When in future it shall be not only so recognized but sensibly and scientifically satisfied, then it will no doubt be found that very great benefit will result to musical art and, through it, to the daily lives of well-nigh everyone on earth.

When the science of education shall have advanced further, music, and especially singing, will hold a very important place in the scheme, and the difference will become clearly apparent between the average normal being with the average vocal equipment and the artist to the manner born. As with those whose trend toward mathematics or languages is unmistakable, so the truly musical are to be distinguished with ease from their fellows; but all such, and especially singers, should be educated with great care and in a broad and comprehensive manner.

Great geniuses have written music to the words of great poets because they were compelled by the inmost needs of their natures to supplement the message of poetry by that of music. What does the world at large care for these things? Only the educated in musical art know that they exist, but the time is now at hand when the storehouses of music will be opened, and their treasures disseminated among the general public through the schools. Instrumental music is so costly in comparison to vocal music that the obvious course to pursue is to train that wonderful instrument, the voice, which all carry about with them, but the value of which is realized by only a few.

The many-sided occupation of the singer should be as carefully studied as that of the pianist, the violinist, or the organist. The vocalist requires a technique comparable to that of any of these virtuosi, a memory trained to answer the demands not only of music but of words, a knowledge not merely of one's own but of several other languages, a training in the manner of



## THE VOICE AND VOCAL MUSIC

speaking and singing intelligibly in these tongues, a mastery of the actor's art with all that it means in gesture, deportment and expression, and, finally, a comprehension of the whole of vocal literature. Would-be singers should be well educated men and women, subjected to rigorous examination in all branches of their art at every stage of progress; for only thus may vocal artists be prepared for their exacting and important career and be made worthy to tread in future our concert platforms and operatic stages. For this way singing will become a dignified profession instead of a spurious and uncertain career, at which the vast majority of those who follow it can expect to earn but a pittance.

The fact should be very clearly forced home upon students that voice alone does not make a public singer any more than the possession of a Stradivarius makes a violinist, but if either has a good instrument the possessor of so valuable a thing should train himself to play upon it with more than ordinary care, and intelligently study not only the classics of his branch of the profession, but, in the case of a singer especially, enlarge his knowledge of poetry, literature, the drama, and the fine arts in general. Thus equipped he may with safety and with reasonable expectations of success take the hazardous path that leads to the supreme honor of lasting public esteem. Every student should recognize this necessity and work with this end in view. The way is long and the task is hard, but it is not impossible.

Ignorance and daring have long gone hand in hand with an assurance which is at times amazing, but the rising generation should be obliged to learn not only how to sing, but what to sing—both equally important. And then, with intelligence awakened, and the dawn of a new day breaking in through the windows of the mind, we may look for the beginnings of an interest in the advancement of a vocal art that has too long been

## INTRODUCTION

harnessed to the car of Fashion, and under the yoke of Commercialism.

As before the Renaissance of plastic art all had been said in painting and sculpture that could be said in the old formulæ, so in music the few notes of the scale had in the hands of the older masters been worked to their ultimate possibilities of expression, when lo! a new light was shed upon the situation, and presently the flood-gates of sound were opened, and undreamed-of works appeared in rapid succession to amaze and affright the senses. Song reflects this, and the limits of vocal capacity have seemingly been reached. It is not to be believed, however, that, to whatever lengths this new musical Renaissance may go, the appeal of simple melody will ever want for an audience. The past has enough and to spare of song that we have not even tasted, much less digested. Let us set ourselves to teach the multitudes of the uninitiated rising generation all the beauties of the classics of song. They are as full as ever of worth and loveliness, and must form a part of the heritage of the generations yet unborn. The peasant from afar has in him the blood of the peoples from which sprang the great artists and musicians of the past, and it is not for a moment to be supposed that under the freer circumstances of life in America works of originality and charm will soon be forthcoming. This is no place nor time for the sadness of a conquered race that by the waters of another land hung up its harps, and refused to sing the songs of home. Here, on the contrary, may all the accumulated wealth of the beauty of song be joyously revealed to the people by the people, and for the people's good.

No words can describe music. Talk of it as we may, only music can tell us of itself. How profound its appeal to the very essence of human nature! In the works that have been left to us we have a marvellous heritage. Let it not be neglected, but preserved, honored, and

## THE VOICE AND VOCAL MUSIC

taught to all, from the least even unto the greatest; for when sound has been wedded to words by one of the anointed hierarchy of the priests of music, what a mystic union is there. How potent the spell of a voice lifted in song informed by the spirit of poetry!

We have here at hand that which makes our Paradise—the gift of song. Let us no longer disregard this fundamental possession, but use it well, and with it enter into the peace that song can give to all who have ears to hear its wondrous message. It is the Evangel that has for so long been knocking at our doors. Let us open wide and welcome this friend and comrade whose voice goes throbbing through the aisles of the vast Temple of Music—that structure not made with hands; heard, not seen, present only to the spirit of mortals, place of worship and refreshment for all generations.

DAVID BISPHAM.

August, 1914.

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# **THE VOICE AND VOCAL MUSIC**



## CHAPTER I

### THE VOCAL ORGANS, THEIR OPERATION AND HYGIENE

The vocal instrument; anatomy of the vocal organs; the healthy mechanism—The larynx; the laryngoscope; operations of the laryngeal muscles—Tone production; the resonating cavities; vowel formation; articulation—Vocal hygiene; incorrect tone production; throat stiffness and its cure.

AN acquaintance with the anatomical structure of the vocal organs, together with an understanding of the acoustic laws bearing on their operations, is usually held necessary to a competent knowledge of the principles of voice culture. A rather tedious course of study is indeed demanded for this purpose. But it will be our aim to present this portion of our subject briefly, touching only on those points which are essential to a practical grasp of vocal methods. For a more extended treatment of the anatomy of the organs of voice and breathing any standard text-book of anatomy may be consulted. It is, however, hoped that our outline of the subject will suffice for the purposes of the general reader.

As the subject of acoustics is dealt with in Vol. XII, the present chapter does not cover this topic. A sufficient understanding of the laws of vibration and resonance is also assumed on the part of the reader.

No man-made musical instrument can compare with the human voice in complexity and delicacy of structure. Yet, so far as the general principles of its construction are concerned, it does not differ materially from the voices of air-breathing mammals and birds in general. In each case the vocal organs form a complex wind instrument, consisting of an air cham-

## THE VOICE AND VOCAL MUSIC

ber (the lungs), a vibrating mechanism (the vocal cords), and a set of reinforcing resonance cavities. The human voice differs from the voices of other air-breathing animals only in its vastly higher development and complexity.

The vocal organs of all the various species of animal life we are now considering were developed as a part of the respiratory system. In the early stages of the evolution of air-breathing animal forms the lungs had only one function, that of supplying air for the oxidizing of the red corpuscles of the blood. No other use was made of the respiratory organs; the breath served no purpose beyond that of furnishing oxygen for the needs of the circulatory system. This was the condition of those forms which were the fore-runners of present mammal and bird life. In the course of evolution a gradual change took place in a part of the respiratory tract. This modification was an example of what is called in evolutionary science 'adaptive change.' The organs of respiration were modified and developed in such a way that the pressure of the expired air could be utilized in the production of sound.

As evolution progressed the organs of voice which thus had their origin took on an ever-increasing complexity of structure. This process of evolution has reached its highest development in man. As a musical instrument the human vocal organs may fairly be said to have reached the point of perfection.

### I

From the anatomist's standpoint the vocal organs consist of four parts:

1. The lungs, together with the bones by which they are inclosed and the muscles which fill and empty them.

## ANATOMY OF THE VOCAL ORGANS

2. The larynx and its appendages.
3. The resonating cavities—trachea, pharynx, mouth, and the cavities of the nose and head.
4. The organs of articulation—the tongue, lips, teeth, etc.

Each of these organs performs a different function in the production of useful and beautiful sounds. It is the generally accepted view among vocal scientists that each portion of the vocal mechanism has one and only one correct mode of operation. Many forms of incorrect action are also possible; indeed, the untrained voice is believed to be liable in almost every case to faulty operation in some respect. Scientific investigation of the voice has for its purpose the determining of the correct muscular actions of the various parts of the vocal mechanism, and the formulation of exercises whereby the student is enabled to acquire command of these actions.

Modern methods of voice culture embody the results of scientific study of the vocal mechanism. It must be observed that not all investigators are agreed upon what constitutes the correct vocal action. Several conflicting theories have been urged concerning the proper movements of the breathing and laryngeal muscles and the operations of the resonating cavities. An exhaustive treatment of these various theories is, however, not called for here. Some of them have been discarded, others have but few followers. The majority of authorities are in fair agreement concerning the theoretical basis of voice culture. In the present chapter only the theoretical aspect of the subject will be considered; the third chapter will be devoted to the practical methods which embody the doctrines of vocal science.

Two opposed sets of muscles are concerned in the operations of breathing, those which, respectively, fill and empty the lungs. The action of inspiration con-

## THE VOICE AND VOCAL MUSIC

sists of an expansion of the chest cavity, which by increasing its cubical capacity draws in air from the outside to fill what would otherwise be a vacuum. The chest cavity is conical in shape, its base being formed by the diaphragm, and its sides and apex by the ribs, the breast-bone, and the intercostal muscles.

Broadly speaking, there are two distinct forms of muscular action by which the chest cavity can be expanded in inspiration: one is the sinking of the base of the chest cavity, the other the broadening of the chest by raising the ribs. Either of these can with some little practice be performed independently of the other.

The sinking of the base of the cavity is accomplished by the contraction of the diaphragm. This muscle is roughly circular in outline. In its relaxed state it rises to a dome in the middle and might be compared in shape to an inverted bowl. As it contracts the diaphragm flattens out and increases the length of the vertical axis of the chest cavity. In its descent it pushes the viscera downward and forces the abdomen to protrude slightly. This manner of breathing is commonly called abdominal, although the muscles of the abdomen are not directly concerned in the filling of the lungs.

The expansion of the chest cavity may be accomplished by the raising of the ribs. Owing to their curved shape and sloping position, a slight elevation of the ribs causes them to rotate outward from the central axis of the chest cavity. This increases the horizontal diameter of the cavity in every direction—forward, backward, and sidewise.

In the judgment of the most competent investigators the best form of breathing combines the two muscular actions just described. At the start of the inspiration the diaphragm descends, but the protruding of the abdomen is checked almost instantly by a contraction

## THE LARYNX

of the abdominal muscles. The inspiration is then completed by the lateral expansion of the chest. In this manner the lungs are filled to their greatest capacity in the least possible time. Another great advantage of this type of breathing is that it imparts a peculiarly erect and graceful carriage, a matter of much importance to the singer and public speaker.

In the action of expiration following the taking of a full breath in the manner just described two sets of muscles are involved. These are: first, the abdominal muscles, which push the diaphragm back to its original position; second, the muscles which lower the ribs (the internal intercostals and some of the external abdominal muscles). The actions of both these sets of muscles can easily be observed. When correctly performed the two actions are simultaneous, the whole chest cavity being gradually and uniformly contracted.

A highly important feature of correct breathing, in the opinion of most authorities, is the control of the expiration. In the first place, all the expired air must be converted into tone and none of it allowed to escape unused. Further, the vocal cords must not be exposed to the full force of a powerful expiratory blast, as they are too small and weak to withstand this pressure without strain and injury. The air must be fed to the vocal cords in just sufficient quantity to serve the purposes of tone production.

It is generally held that this economy of breath can be secured, without strain on the vocal cords, only by opposing the action of the inspiratory muscles to the action of the muscles of expiration. Instead of allowing the inspiratory muscles to relax completely at the beginning of the expiration these muscles are to be held on tension throughout the expiration. By this means both the force and the speed of the expiration can be regulated at will; no undue pressure is exerted



## THE VOICE AND VOCAL MUSIC

on the vocal cords, and the tone is prolonged steadily and evenly so long as the expiration lasts.

### II

The main passage from the lungs to the outer air is the trachea or windpipe, a tube formed of from sixteen to twenty rings of cartilage, united by tendons and muscular fibres, and lined with mucous membrane. At the top of the trachea is situated the larynx, the organ of phonation, strictly speaking. The larynx

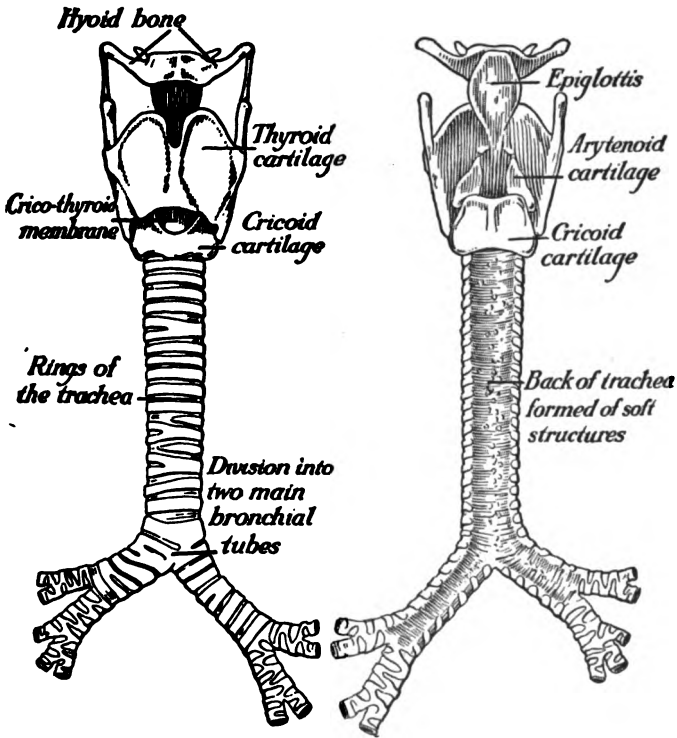


FIGURE I

is built up of two cartilages, the thyroid and cricoid, which represent developments of what once were the

## THE LARYNX

uppermost two rings of the trachea. The cricoid cartilage, forming the base of the larynx, is shaped like a seal ring, with the bezel to the back. The thyroid cartilage, just above the cricoid, has the form of an open book, V-shaped in horizontal section. In the interior of the larynx are two tiny cartilages, the right and left arytenoids. These rest on top of the rear portion of the cricoid, on which they rotate freely.

Figure I shows two views, front and rear, of the cartilages of the trachea and larynx. Immediately above and connected with the thyroid cartilage is the hyoid bone, which serves as the attachment of the base of the tongue. It is shaped like a horseshoe, the ends pointing to the rear.

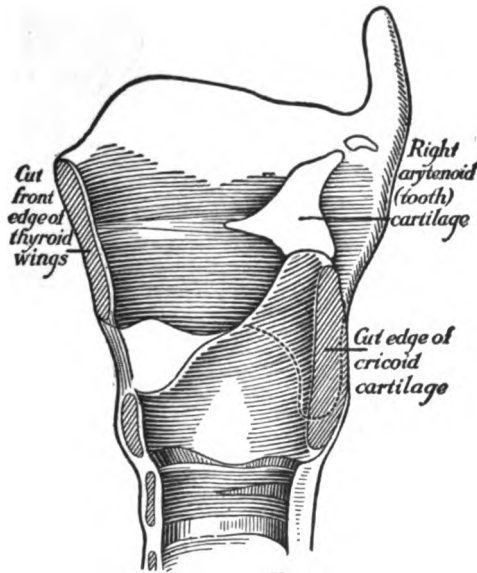


FIGURE II

Figure II presents a section of the interior of the larynx, all the muscular tissues having been removed. In this cut the position of the arytenoid cartilages is plainly shown.

## THE VOICE AND VOCAL MUSIC

By feeling the outside of the throat with the thumb on one side and the forefinger on the other, the hyoid bone and the thyroid and cricoid cartilages can easily be located. The space between the two cartilages in front is covered by the crico-thyroid membrane.

The muscles of the larynx are considered in two groups, the extrinsic, those which connect the larynx with the other parts of the body, and the intrinsic, those which belong to the larynx strictly speaking. By the extrinsic muscles the larynx is held in its place

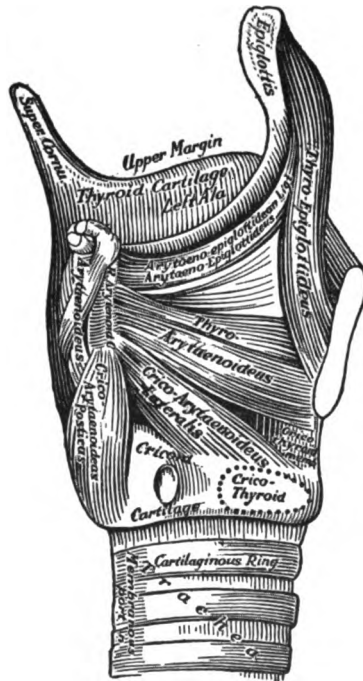


FIGURE III

in the throat. These muscles are usually held to have no direct office in phonation.

The intrinsic muscles of the larynx are nine in number, as follows:

## THE LARYNX

- 2 Thyro-arytenoids, right and left.
- 2 Crico-thyroids, right and left.
- 2 Lateral crico-arytenoids, right and left.
- 2 Posterior crico-arytenoids, right and left.
- 1 Arytenoideus.

In Figure III these muscles are plainly shown. This cut presents a view of the interior of the left half of the larynx; the right half of the thyroid cartilage has been removed, together with the muscles which lie to the right of the middle line of the larynx. We see the muscles of the left side of the interior of the

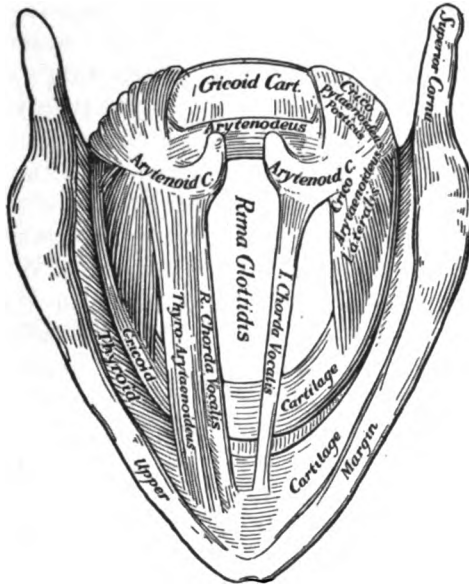


FIGURE IV

larynx and also the right posterior crico-arytenoideus and the right crico-thyroid.

The thyro-arytenoideus muscles are attached in front to the interior angle of the thyroid cartilage, and at the back to the arytenoid cartilages. To their outer edges the vocal cords are attached and the space between them is called the glottis. The crico-thyroids

## THE VOICE AND VOCAL MUSIC

are attached to the outer surfaces of the cartilages. The lateral and posterior crico-arytenoids have very complex attachments, which can be seen in Figure III. The arytenoideus connects the rear surfaces of the two arytenoid cartilages. In Figure IV a drawing of the larynx is presented, looked at from above, the surrounding parts having been dissected away to allow a clear view of the muscles just considered.

It is impossible to state with absolute certainty just what office the various intrinsic laryngeal muscles have in the production of tones of different pitches and qualities. Most of our information regarding this subject has been obtained by means of the laryngoscope. People interested in singing are now very generally acquainted with this little instrument, although it was invented by Manuel Garcia so recently as 1855. While it is generally used only by physicians, anyone who wishes to can easily procure one and by its means observe the actions of his own vocal cords. The laryngoscope consists of a little mirror fitted to a handle at an angle of about 100 degrees. When used by a physician, it is held in the back of the subject's throat, the tongue being pulled forward and to one side. A ray of strong light is reflected into it from another mirror, which the observer straps to his forehead. This ray of light is again reflected by the laryngeal mirror so as to illuminate the vocal cords. At the same time the observer sees in the laryngeal mirror the image of the vocal cords and so studies their movements.

While laryngoscopic observation has thrown much valuable light on the operations of the laryngeal muscles, it has not by any means cleared up all the mysteries pertaining to this peculiarly intricate subject. All the muscles concerned are very small. Each one contains a vast and intricate number of tiny fibres, extending in widely varying directions. As each one

## OPERATION OF THE LARYNGEAL MUSCLES

of these sets of fibres can be contracted with a greater or less degree of strength than those most intimately connected with it, the possibility of variety in the combined actions of the laryngeal musculature is seen to be almost unlimited. Many conflicting theories have been offered to explain the details of the laryngeal action, but a comprehensive review of the subject is not called for here. Our purpose will be served by stating the most generally accepted theory, without committing ourselves as to its accuracy or sufficiency. This theory is as follows:

In quiet breathing all the laryngeal muscles are in a state of relaxation, with the possible exception of the posterior crico-arytenoids. These muscles draw the arytenoid cartilages apart, and so open the glottis. For the production of a tone the glottis is closed by the contraction of the arytenoideus, which pulls the arytenoid cartilages together. The tension of the vocal cords is regulated by two sets of muscles: first, the thyro-arytenoids, to which the cords are directly attached; second, the lateral crico-arytenoids, which rotate the arytenoid cartilages, bringing their forward spurs together.

The pitch of the tone is determined in two ways: first, by the tension of the vocal cords; second, by their effective length. In different parts of the vocal range the manner of adjustment for pitch varies. For the lowest notes of the voice, the chest register, the cords vibrate in their full length. As the pitch rises in singing an ascending scale passage in this part of the voice, the tension of the vocal cords is gradually increased by a corresponding increase in the strength of the contraction of the thyro-arytenoids. When the limit of the chest register has been reached, a further ascent in pitch is brought about by the gradual shortening of the vocal cords. This is effected by the contraction of the lateral crico-arytenoids, which rotate

## THE VOICE AND VOCAL MUSIC

the arytenoid cartilages inward, as has just been described. The forward spurs of these cartilages are slightly curved in shape, so that, as they continue to rotate, their point of contact is gradually brought further and further forward. As the vocal cords are held tightly together behind this point, the portion of the cords left free to vibrate is shortened with each material increase in the tension of the lateral crico-arytenoids.

With each shortening of the vibrating parts of the cords the pitch is correspondingly raised. The portion of the vocal range thus produced is called the medium register. The highest note of the medium register is reached when the forward spurs of the arytenoid cartilages are in contact at their tips. Beyond this point there can be no further shortening of the vocal cords in this way. The remaining notes of the compass, known as the head register, are secured through a shortening of the effective length of the vocal cords at their forward ends, as well as by a further increase in their tension. Both these actions are accomplished by the contraction of the thyro-arytenoids.

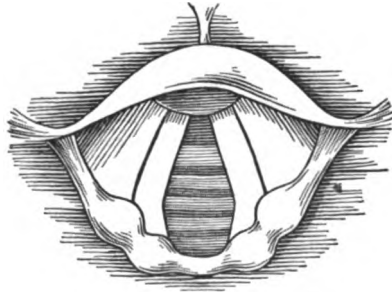


FIGURE V

Figure V shows a laryngoscopic view of the larynx, as it appears in quiet breathing. It will be observed that the vocal cords are widely separated, and the

## TONE PRODUCTION

glottis is opened to its full extent. A similar view of the larynx during the production of tone is given in

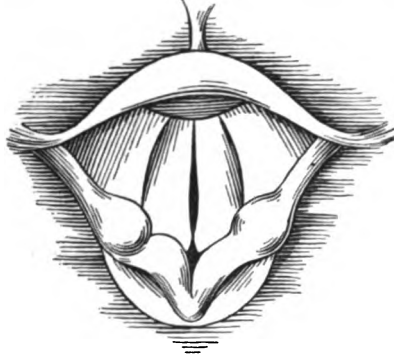


FIGURE VI

Figure VI. The vocal cords are closely approximated and the glottis is narrowed to a tiny slit-like opening.

### III



What was said about the uncertainty of our present knowledge concerning the laryngeal action applies with almost equal force to the other operations of tone production. Beyond the basic facts that the tones of the voice are produced by the vibration of the vocal cords and are reinforced and modified by the influence of the resonance cavities, little can be stated with absolute certainty. There is, of course, no question as to the definiteness of our knowledge of the anatomical structure of the parts involved. But, with regard to the muscular operations of the resonance cavities and the application of acoustic and mechanical principles in these operations, the same uncertainty is encountered as in the laryngeal actions. We shall continue therefore to outline the most widely accepted theories, without entering into a discussion as to their soundness.

Considered acoustically, the voice is a wind instru-



## THE VOICE AND VOCAL MUSIC

ment of the reed class. It differs, however, from all other reed instruments in several particulars. It is capable of producing a wide range of pitches, covering more than three octaves in many cases, by the operation of a single pair of reeds. Further, it has command of an immense range of tone qualities, through the combined action of its reed mechanism and its resonating cavities.

For the production of tone the vocal cords are brought together and held on tension with sufficient strength momentarily to close the glottis and check the outflow of the expired breath. As a slight degree of condensation takes place in the air behind the cords, they are forced apart and a tiny puff of air is allowed to escape. Immediately the cords spring back, once more close the glottis, and again check the outflow of the breath. This is repeated a varying number of times per second, the rate of rapidity of the succession of puffs being regulated by the degree of tension of the vocal cords, and by their effective vibrating length. The pitch of the tone thus produced is determined by the rate of the air puffs; these range from 75 per second for the lowest usual bass note,  to 1,417 per second for the highest usual soprano note, .

The tone produced by the vibration of the vocal cords is complex in its acoustic character, containing the fundamental note and a large number of its overtones. Yet as it leaves the cords the tone is weak in power and of rather characterless quality. In order to be of musical quality, volume, and carrying power, the primary or vocal cord tone requires to be modified and reinforced by the resonance cavities.

The resonating cavities of the voice, mastery of which is considered essential to the scientific management of the voice, are the chest, the mouth-pharynx,

## THE RESONATING CAVITIES

the nasal passages, and the sphenoid, ethmoid, and frontal sinuses. Each of these is adapted by its size and shape to reinforce either the fundamental note or certain of its overtones with especial prominence. In order to produce a satisfactory tone each resonance cavity must exercise its particular influence in the proper way, their combined effect being necessary to a correct use of the voice.

Much importance is attached by most vocal authorities to the subject of chest resonance. It is believed that the size of the chest cavity,\* much greater than that of the other resonating spaces, adapts it especially to the reinforcement of the fundamental note and its lower overtones.† The mouth-pharynx cavity is capable of extreme variability in both size and shape. This mobility enables it to reinforce a wide variety of overtones, and so to exercise a most important influence in determining the quality of the tone. Another function of this cavity is to increase the power of the primary or vocal cord tone. To secure the effect of crescendo in a single tone, the force of the expiratory blast is gradually increased. In order that the tone may be of uniform musical quality as it swells from soft to loud, a corresponding increase must take place in the size of the mouth-pharynx cavity. This is effected by the gradual opening of the mouth by a lateral expansion of the pharynx and by a lowering of the base of the tongue. A slight elevation of the soft

\* A certain allowance must be made for popular forms of speech in dealing with the subject of chest resonance. It is plain that the air in the chest cavity could not possibly be thrown into regular vibrations. In the acoustic sense the chest is not a hollow space, but a solid body. Filled as it is with the spongy tissue of the lungs, as well as the heart and the great blood vessels, there is no room for the formation of air waves or the oscillation of air particles. Another form of resonance is involved here, what is known in acoustics as sounding-board resonance. The reinforcing vibrations of the chest are those of its bony structure, which vibrates according to the same principle as the sounding-board of a piano.

† Overtones, or harmonics, are the tones produced by the vibrations of the individual parts of a resonating body, into which it automatically divides itself. See Vol. XII.

## THE VOICE AND VOCAL MUSIC

palate may also contribute to the expansion of the cavity.

A highly important feature of mouth-pharynx resonance is the forming of the various vowel sounds. Each vowel is simply a distinct quality of sound, caused by the special prominence of some one or two overtones. Helmholtz investigated this aspect of voice production exhaustively. At first thought, it seems strange that a tone on some one pitch gives the effect of a particular vowel. Yet we can readily hear this in the steam siren whistle commonly used for alarms of fire. This produces a screaming sound, caused by a gradual rise and fall of pitch through a range of several octaves. Its almost vocal effect of 'Ooh-oh-ah-eh-ee' gives us a clear idea of the manner in which these vowels are each the sound of a note somewhat higher than the one preceding.

Helmholtz gives as the determining notes for certain of the German vowels the following table:



For each vowel the mouth-pharynx must assume a shape and size adapted to reinforce with special prominence its particular note or notes. Anyone can readily observe for himself what the positions of the tongue and lips are for the various vowels. For *ee* the tongue is arched high in the mouth and the lips are only slightly parted. For *ah* the mouth is opened slightly wider, while the tongue lies flat, etc.

No variation can be made in the size or shape of the nasal and head cavities. As these hollow spaces are small and very various in form, they reinforce only the higher overtones. Special prominence given to the higher upper partials \* has the effect of making

\* Overtones. Cf. note above.

## VOWEL FORMATION; ARTICULATION

the tone brilliant and somewhat metallic in quality, and it is here that the special function of nasal resonance is seen. A certain degree of nasal resonance is therefore essential to the correctly used voice, but this must be kept within well-defined bounds. Excessive prominence of this resonance is the cause of the unpleasantly nasal sound which is absolutely out of place in correct tone production.

There remains to be treated under this head the production of consonant sounds. Consonant sounds are of various acoustic characters and are formed in a variety of ways. They may best be considered as of two classes: those into which a tone produced by the vocal cords enters and those devoid of this element. The other determining factor in consonant formation is the point at which an interruption takes place in the outflow of the breath.

There are a number of allied pairs of consonants, one with and the other without an accompanying vocal sound. These are:

*v* and *f*

*b* and *p*

*z* and *s*

*d* and *t*

*j* and *ch*

*th* (as in *that*) and *th* (as in *think*)

*z* (as in *azure*) and *sh*

*g* and *k*

In each of these pairs the interruption takes place at the same point—*v* and *f* between the lower lip and the upper teeth, *b* and *p* at the lips, etc.

Another class of consonants are the so-called sonants or liquids, *l*, *m*, *n*, and *ng*. In these the vocal tone may have appreciable duration; we can hum a tune on any one of them; *m*, *n*, and *ng* are emitted solely through the nostrils, the orifice of the mouth being completely closed.

## THE VOICE AND VOCAL MUSIC

*R* may be pronounced in two ways, the trilled or rolled *r* being best for the purposes of singing. Another form of this consonant, made by the vibration of the uvula in contact with the back of the tongue, is essential to a correct (conversational) pronunciation of both French and German, although it has no place in English. The rolled *r*, however, is generally used in singing by both the French and the Germans.

### IV

A highly beneficial form of physical exercise is found in the regular daily practice of singing. All the muscles of the abdomen and thorax are strengthened by this exercise; the lungs are developed to their greatest normal capacity, and the habit is formed of breathing at all times in the most healthful manner. Both the circulation and the digestion share in the benefits derived from regular vocal practice, and the general health inevitably reflects the advantages incident to a proper performance of these most important bodily functions. An erect and graceful bearing, with well poised head and shoulders and firm, elastic step, can be secured through the correct practice of singing more readily than in almost any other way.

Yet the professional use of the voice imposes considerable restrictions on the singer's habits of daily life. As Sir Morell Mackenzie has said, the singer is an athlete who must always be in training. A perfect condition of the voice demands a perfect state of general health. The singer must plan his whole life in conformity with the demands imposed on him by his art. The slightest indisposition of any kind is almost invariably reflected in the voice. Under the conditions in which people in the usual walks of life are placed, slight colds and trifling upset states of the di-

## INCORRECT TONE PRODUCTION

gestive organs are a matter of almost no concern. But with the professional singer conditions are entirely different. So delicate and finely adjusted are the laryngeal muscles of the cultivated voice that their 'tone' may be upset by apparently insignificant causes. The mucous membranes of the larynx and throat are also highly sensitive to severe and unfavorable conditions.

It is necessary, therefore, for the singer to study himself, to learn by experience what is good and what is bad for him. This is a matter in which individual peculiarities play so great a part that only very general rules can safely be laid down. Singing within less than two hours after the eating of a hearty meal is almost certain to have an injurious effect on the voice. Exposure and over-fatigue must be carefully avoided. Stimulants, especially alcohol and tobacco, have a markedly bad influence on the mucous membranes of the throat. But beyond general statements of this kind, so obvious indeed that their truth is fairly well known, little can with safety be said as to the regimen imposed on the singer. That one man's meat is another man's poison is most strikingly true in its application to the voice. Many famous singers have been excessive smokers without seeming to suffer any ill results from the habit. Yet with most vocalists tobacco has a very irritating effect on the mucous membranes. So, also, with regard to eating and drinking, the widest differences of individual constitution are seen. Hot drinks are beneficial to some voices, injurious to others; cold drinks and ices are equally contradictory in their influence on the voice. All these questions of daily habit must be decided by each singer for himself and experience is the only safe guide.

There is a class of dangers to which the voice is exposed, entirely distinct from the influence of un-

## THE VOICE AND VOCAL MUSIC

favorable conditions of the general health. Most of the throat troubles to which singers and public speakers are liable are directly traceable to a wrong use of the vocal organs. One of the most striking facts regarding the voice is this: If the voice is correctly produced it is benefited by exercise and improves steadily, year after year, in power, beauty, and facility of execution. On the other hand, when the voice is wrongly or imperfectly used exercise has exactly the opposite effect. Badly produced voices constantly deteriorate; their use results in course of time in throat troubles, of which the number and variety seem almost inconceivably great.

One general trouble lies at the bottom of all the throat ailments which follow on a wrong use of the vocal organs. This is a state of muscular strain suffered by the delicate muscles of the larynx. Every incorrect manner of producing vocal tone imposes an excessive degree of effort on these muscles. On the practical side the difference between the correct production of tone and any wrong use of the voice may be stated thus: When the voice is correctly used each tiny muscle of the larynx exerts exactly the right degree of effort in its contraction. To just this amount of exertion the muscles are fitted by Nature and in it they find their normal and healthful exercise. Incorrect tone production, on the other hand, always involves an excessive expenditure of effort on the part of the laryngeal muscles. The throat is in a state of muscular stiffness, in which all the muscles are contracted with more than their normal and appropriate degree of effort.

Muscular stiffness is indeed possible in any part of the body. It can be well illustrated as follows: Take a pencil and a sheet of paper and copy a few lines of what you are reading; grasp the pencil with all the strength of your fingers and exert all the power of your

## THROAT STIFFNESS AND ITS CURE

hand and arm in forming the letters. You will find that your arm and hand tire after a few minutes of writing in this manner. This follows from the expenditure of vastly more effort than is required for the purpose of writing.

All the muscles of the body are arranged in opposed pairs and groups. As your hand rests on the table, the contraction of one set of muscles brings the thumb and the first two fingers together so as to grasp the pencil. An opposed set will, by their contraction, spread these fingers apart, and the pencil will be released. If, now, both these sets of muscles are contracted at the same time the pencil is held stiffly, and the hand moves to form the letters only by the exertion of considerable effort. The muscles themselves are stiffened by this simultaneous contraction of opposed pairs and groups.

Throat stiffness, the characteristic feature of all incorrect vocal actions, is exactly similar in its nature to the stiffness of the hand and arm just considered. The laryngeal muscles are also arranged in sets which oppose their action one to another. One set (the posterior crico-arytenoids) opens the glottis, another set (the arytenoideus and the lateral crico-arytenoids) closes the glottis and brings the vocal cords on tension. Now, if the glottis opening muscles are contracted during tone production, the opposed muscles must put forth enough strength to overcome the effects of this contraction in addition to that which they are normally called upon to exert. This applies also to all the other sets of laryngeal muscles. Through this excessive tension the delicate laryngeal muscles are strained and weakened, and in the course of time the voice is permanently injured. This condition of throat stiffness is by no means uncommon, a matter for which modern methods of voice culture are to a certain degree responsible. The attempt to manage



## THE VOICE AND VOCAL MUSIC

the vocal organs directly is very apt to lead to excessive tension of the muscles.

Throat stiffness is very insidious in its workings. It tends always to become more pronounced and to impose a constantly greater strain on the voice. Yet in its beginnings the singer may be completely unaware of any trouble. The muscles of the larynx are very poorly supplied with sensory nerves, so poorly, indeed, that under ordinary circumstances we are utterly unconscious of their movements. Owing to this fact, a condition of strain may exist without making itself manifest by any painful sensation. It thus comes about that a singer may suffer from the constantly progressing effects of throat stiffness before its results are so pronounced as to be painful.

Yet there is one infallible way of determining whether a voice is correctly used, or whether, on the contrary, its production is characterized by excessive muscular tension. This is found in the sound of the tones. Any degree of throat stiffness is invariably reflected in the sound of the voice. A throaty quality of tone always results from an incorrect manner of production, and this quality can result in no other way. While a keen and highly experienced ear is needed to detect a slight degree of throatiness, any ordinary observer can hear this condition when it is very pronounced. True, it is very much easier to detect a throaty quality in the voice of some one else than in one's own voice. The singer labors under this disadvantage, that he can never hear his own voice as clearly and with the same discrimination as can the people who listen to him. Yet by practice and careful attention this difficulty can in great measure be overcome.

For the cure of throat stiffness and its attendant ills the physician can do but little. Even the diagnosis of the condition can hardly be said to lie within his province. In very bad cases a swelling of the muscles

## THROAT STIFFNESS AND ITS CURE

inside the larynx can be detected, as well as a sympathetic congestion of the mucous membranes. The existence of nodes on the vocal cords, rather a rare condition resulting from long-continued vocal strain, can also be determined by laryngoscopic examination. But in the case of the great majority of singers suffering from the effects of throat stiffness the only competent diagnosis is made by the vocal teacher, whose ear is sufficiently trained and experienced to hear the exact nature of the trouble. Further, it is the vocal teacher alone who can relieve and permanently cure the condition. The physician can allay the inflammation of the mucous membranes and can temporarily stimulate the vocal muscles. But no lasting relief can be given in this way. Only one real cure is possible. That is the abandonment of the incorrect habits of tone production and the adoption of the correct manner of using the voice.

## CHAPTER II

### VOCAL CULTIVATION AND THE OLD ITALIAN METHOD

Historical aspect of vocal cultivation—The modern conception of voice culture; the mechanical and psychological methods—Ancient systems—Medieval Europe—The revival of solo singing; the rise of coloratura—The old Italian method—The *bel canto* teachers: Caccini; Tosi and Mancini; the *Conservatoire* method; the Italian course of instruction; theoretical basis of the Italian method.

MUSICAL historians generally agree that the training of voices for the purposes of artistic singing had its beginnings about the year 1600. Voice culture as a distinct department of musical education is held to date no further back than the time when solo singing first began to attract the attention of educated musicians. This view, however, is altogether misleading. From its very beginnings the art of music in Europe was built upon the foundation of singing; no other type of music was, indeed, recognized as a legitimate branch of the art until music had progressed through several centuries of development. Music was brought up to the beginning of its present stage of evolution through the working out of theories which were exemplified in practice only by the use of voices. Counterpoint, the basis of musical composition until well along in the seventeenth century, had its origin in vocal music; throughout its entire history, up to its highest expression in the music of Palestrina and his school, contrapuntal writing was applied only to works composed for voices. Even if no records were to be found of any means used for training the voice, the conclusion would be inevitable that, throughout all these centuries (roughly speaking, from the sixth to the seventeenth),

## MODERN CONCEPTION OF VOICE CULTURE

some attention must have been paid to vocal development and technique. It is true that anyone endowed with a good voice can sing, with some degree of facility, any simple music which he has the ability to memorize. No technical training of the voice is needed to enable one to sing simple songs. Folk-music was the possession of the great mass of the people to whom any ideas of vocal management were utterly unknown. This was also true of the various classes of minstrels, troubadours, etc. Although theirs was purely a vocal art, the only training their voices ever received was that incidental to the actual singing of their music. But for the performance of the music incorporated in the Roman ritual throughout all its history this untutored style of singing would not have sufficed. A much better command of the voice was needed than can be acquired merely through the unguided singing of simple folk-songs and lays. Precision, power, and facility of voice were demanded in the music of the church and these could not have been hit upon by accident. The chances are all against a voice falling into the correct manner of production if called upon to sing music of any difficulty without some definite instruction. This will be made clearer by a consideration of the peculiar problem involved in any extended use of the voice.

### I

Modern thought on the subject of vocal cultivation has crystallized along well-defined lines. For one thing, it has emphasized in a striking way the problem of the management of the vocal organs. The fact is now clearly recognized that the voice has one correct mode of operating, as well as an almost limitless possibility of wrong or incorrect forms of activity. When the voice is correctly produced it can be used daily in large halls and churches without strain or undue fa-

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figure. By judicious exercise, when rightly produced, the voice is greatly increased in volume and power; it acquires facility in the singing of difficult and elaborate music; its compass is increased, giving it command of a wider range of notes than is possessed by the untrained voice.

Yet vocal cultivation demands the adoption of the correct management of the vocal organs. When the voice is correctly produced nothing more than judicious exercise is needed to bring it to the condition of technical mastery. But if the proper manner of producing tone is not acquired, then the exercise of the voice is fraught with peril to the vocal organs. Instead of the voice being benefited by practice the contrary result is almost inevitable. The use of a wrongly produced voice on an extended scale, involving, as it must, the daily attempt to produce tones powerful enough to fill a large space, strains and injures the vocal organs. This results in a weakening of the voice, in loss of control, in discomfort and pain to the singer, in a strained, harsh quality of tone, and finally, if persisted in long enough, in complete loss of voice.

The difference between the correct use of the voice and any incorrect manner of producing tone is inherent in the organ itself. No one who wishes to sing can elude the problem which Nature thus propounds. On the contrary, the problem of vocal management must be solved some time in the course of a singer's vocal studies or the technical command of the voice can never be attained. Vocal cultivation is that form of exercise of the voice which leads, through the correct management of the organ, to a command of all the voice's resources of beauty, range, power, and flexibility.

Even on the earliest singers of the church a solution of the vocal problem was imposed. These singers had to perform daily in large cathedrals and churches;

## MECHANICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL METHODS

they had to sing their music in time and in tune. Some measure of vocal cultivation was of necessity involved in their training. We are, fortunately, not left in ignorance of the methods applied in vocal training in the centuries which preceded the rise of solo singing. Many references to this subject found in the writings of early musical historians have been gathered together by H. F. Mannstein in his *Geschichte, Geist, und Ausübung des Gesanges von Gregor dem Grossen bis auf unsere Zeit* (Leipzig, 1845). Fétis also contains many passages which throw valuable light on the subject. It is true that the subject has been considered rather obscure, owing to the fact that students have looked for something not to be found, that is, for rules bearing on the mechanical management of the vocal organs. In order to understand this subject fully the modern conception of voice culture must first be briefly considered.

Modern methods of voice culture are based upon the doctrine that the vocal organs must be consciously guided by the singer in the correct performance of their functions. The idea is that the voice must be led to adopt the correct manner of action by direct attention to its mechanical processes. According to the present conception, the singer must see to it that his vocal cords act in a certain way; that his breath is controlled at the proper point; that the tones have the correct origin and receive the influence of resonance in the correct manner. Even back of this conception lies a belief in the helplessness of the vocal organs to hit upon the proper mode of acting without the conscious direction of the singer. The singer must impose a certain manner of operating on the voice and carefully supervise all the processes of tone production. This is the scientific view of voice culture; until quite recently it was almost universally held.

It is almost incredible that this view is thoroughly

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modern and that its origin cannot be traced further back than the invention of the laryngoscope in 1855. Not until 1883 did the scientific view of vocal cultivation find definite expression in the writings of any authority on the voice; in that year Browne and Behnke, in their book entitled 'Voice, Song, and Speech,' stated the scientific doctrine in plain terms, and asserted that the voice cannot be controlled in any other way than by attention to the mechanical processes of the vocal organs. For many years thereafter this doctrine went unchallenged, and methods of voice culture treated as the most important materials of instruction the means they embodied for enabling students of singing to acquire direct conscious control over their vocal organs.

An entirely different conception of voice culture has recently been advanced and has indeed made great headway. From the fact that the new doctrine found its first complete statement in the writer's 'Psychology of Singing' (New York, 1908), it has come to be known as the psychological theory, in contradistinction to the mechanical theory embodied in the scientific system.

Briefly stated, the psychological theory of voice production is as follows: To the vocal problem propounded by nature the solution has also been furnished by nature herself. Nature has endowed the voice with a sufficient guide and monitor—the sense of hearing. There is a direct connection between the cerebral centres of hearing and the centres governing the muscles of the vocal organs. The volitional impulse to produce a certain sound involves the hearing of the sound in imagination; through the nerve fibres connecting the centres of hearing and of voice, the nerve impulse is sent to the vocal organs which causes them to assume the positions and perform the muscular contractions necessary for the production of the desired tone. Thus the voice is controlled by the ear, and it needs no other

## MECHANICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL METHODS

form of control than that furnished by the ear. A correct management of the voice in singing results in the production of tones of a distinct characteristic sound, while any incorrect use of the voice produces tones which differ from the correct type, more or less, according to the degree of faultiness in the vocal management. The ear is the only reliable judge of the voice. Only by listening to the tones it produces can it be determined whether a voice is correctly used or not. The object of vocal cultivation is first of all to enable the voice to produce the correct type of tone. This is accomplished by practice, which consists of repeated efforts to sing tones of the type recognized by the ear as correct. If the ear has the right conception of pure tone, the vocal organs gradually fall into the way of producing correct tones, that is, of operating in the correct manner. In this the voice is guided by its own instincts, which offer a safer and more efficient guidance than that provided by the conscious management of the vocal organs. No attention whatever need be paid to the mechanical operations of tone production. The vocal organs are informed by the mental ear what is expected of them, and perform their functions instinctively without any help from the intellect.

One advantage of the psychological doctrine is that it at once dispels all the mystery which has seemed to surround the early history of the subject, and which has extended even to the method of the Italian teachers of *bel canto*. Little notice has indeed been taken of the systems of vocal cultivation which flourished before the rise of the Italian school of vocal teachers. But since the universal adoption of the scientific doctrine, repeated efforts have been made to penetrate the secret of the old method. These efforts have always resulted in failure, for the reason already mentioned. Investigators have sought to re-discover the form of instruction used for the purpose of imparting



## THE VOICE AND VOCAL MUSIC

a direct conscious control of the vocal organs; their conviction that no other means of vocal command is possible has blinded students of the subject to the instinctive processes actually followed. As our main purpose in the present chapter is to describe the system now known as the old Italian method, a fuller treatment of its records, both literary and traditional, will be reserved for a later section. A review of the early history of voice culture will lead most readily to the consideration of the old Italian method.

### II

Ancient systems of vocal culture call for only passing mention. In the early civilizations of Egypt, Chaldea and Assyria the art of singing was cultivated assiduously. In the services of the temples this ancient art found its most serious and dignified employment. Each of the countries named possessed, at the time of its highest civilization, a highly elaborate ritual of worship, in which singing played a most important part. Every temple had its corps of trained singers, who were especially educated for this office. The most important feature of the education of the temple singers was the memorizing of the musical settings to which the various poems and chronicles of the ritual were sung and chanted. The course of instruction consisted of the actual singing of the music, under the tuition of a master whose memory was stored with the entire devotional repertoire of the cult. A proper performance of the music was the object sought, and to this the most earnest attention was paid. But incident to this was the production of the quality and type of tones which experience had shown to be best adapted to the use of the voice in the massive temples and in the open-air services. The temple music schools were under the constant supervision of the priests and other

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officials in charge and the classes met regularly for instruction and practice.

Very much the same system was followed in the Temple at Jerusalem. Of the musical system developed there we have a highly complete and satisfactory record. Here the art of singing was carried to a very high pitch of development. At the time of Solomon there were 4,000 Levites attached to the Temple, whose office it was to sing and intone the various services. The elaborate ritual contained musical settings for the Psalms and certain of the historical and prophetic books, which demanded a high degree of vocal ability for their rendition. Both the priests and the Levites received a lengthy training in the singing of the music allotted to them. The music of the Temple is especially interesting to the student of the history of singing, for the reason that it included a remarkably developed system of vocal ornamentation. It would have been impossible to sing this music without a thorough command of the voice, and the education of the priests and Levites therefore included a comprehensive system of vocal cultivation.

The experience of the early masters of the old Italian school taught them that the best means for training the voice in facility and flexibility is the actual singing of ornamental florid music. This was also the plan followed in the school attached to the Temple. A system of notation was in use, somewhat similar to that of the neumes used in Europe from the ninth to the thirteenth century. Every standard ornament and melodic phrase was represented by a letter, according to a strictly arbitrary system. A most important part of the Temple method of musical instruction was the memorizing of the various phrases, groups, runs, etc., represented by the significant letters. This was purely a matter of convention, that is, the meaning of the letters was recorded only in the memories of the in-

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structors and the graduate students. The instructor taught the phrase for which a letter stood by singing it for his students and having them sing it after him until they had committed it to memory and learned to associate it with the letter. As the musical phrases were all melodious and in most cases ornamental, the voice thus received an effective training. One of the puzzling aspects of the first solo singing in European music is the difficulty found in tracing the origin of the vocal embellishments of which it so largely consisted. A possible explanation of this mystery may be found in the music of the Temple. How the traditions so carefully treasured there could have found their way into Italy after the lapse of nearly 2,000 years will be considered in a later section of this chapter.

In classic Athens the voice was trained for the purposes of both oratory and singing. A specially recognized profession was that of the vocal trainer or *phonascus*, whose duties embraced the vocal cultivation of both singers and public speakers. A well-developed system of voice culture was followed by these teachers, who superintended classes in the daily practice of systematic exercises. For the training of the speaking voice a pupil began his daily practice by repeating detached sentences at short intervals. From this he passed to the declamation of long phrases, beginning on the lowest notes of the voice, raising the pitch gradually until the highest notes were reached, and then again descending to the lowest range. The exercises in singing were very similar, although greater attention was paid to the sustaining of high notes. Owing to the immense size of the Greek open-air theatres, and to the masks that were always worn by the actors, volume and power of voice were of the utmost importance. The actors might justly be described as singers, as all their speeches were delivered in a style of vocal declamation not unlike our modern recitative.

## VOCAL CULTURE IN MEDLÆVAL EUROPE

Very much the same methods of vocal cultivation were followed in ancient Rome, although much more attention was paid to oratory than to singing. There is no reason to believe that voice culture in Europe was influenced in any way by the classic systems of either Greece or Rome.

### III

Vocal cultivation in Europe had an independent beginning. It may be that some of the musical traditions of the Hebrew Temple had been carried over into the earlier churches which were founded in Italy, as there is no doubt that the same traditions were adopted as the basis of the Eastern church ritual at Constantinople. Certain it is that prior to the reform of St. Ambrose much of the music of the early Roman church was highly ornamental in character. At any rate, with the founding of the choir school attached to the Pontifical chapel at Rome in the year 590 voice culture made a new start; it underwent a steady development, and continued to progress without interruption until it reached its fullest fruition in the Italian school of singing in the seventeenth century. The choir school at Rome was intended to serve as a model for the entire Western church; it supplied singers for the papal choir, which was established to illustrate the proper rendition of Gregorian music. At the beginning the course of instruction followed in the Roman choir school was extremely rudimentary, and so it continued for several centuries. The *maestro di cappella* had as part of his duties the training of the singers' voices. This was accomplished according to the purely instinctive system followed in the similar schools of the ancient temples. The students committed to memory the music as it was sung by the choir master; in the course of their constant repetition of the various musical numbers their voices received the necessary train-

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ing and development. Schools similar to that at Rome were established at all the great cathedrals and the Roman system of musical instruction was thus spread over the entire church.

Throughout the Middle Ages musical learning and culture—what little there was of them—were the exclusive property of the church, and the only centres of musical instruction were the choir schools. Every advance which music made during these centuries involved an extension of the art of singing, and this necessitated of course a corresponding progress of the art of vocal training. Progress was painfully slow; indeed little can be pointed out as marking any distinct advance until the invention of the *sol-fa* system of instruction by Guido d'Arezzo about the year 1100.\* On the basis of this system an entirely new form of musical education was erected, which continued to flourish until well along in the 17th century. The new system of musical instruction consisted of what we should now call a training in sight singing.

The first method of vocal culture worthy the name was a natural outgrowth of the *sol-fa* system. Students were trained in a knowledge of the intervals by singing the *ut, re, mi* syllables in different combinations. Choir masters were not slow to observe that this form of study offered excellent means for acquiring a command of the voice. With the exception of the first one, *ut*, all the *sol-fa* syllables are sonorous and easily sung. The difficulty attached to the singing of *ut* was obviated by substituting for it the syllable *do*. Constant singing of the syllables was found to have an admirable effect on the voice, and they were soon adopted as the basis of vocal instruction. *Sol-fa* practice was made to serve a double purpose; both the ear and the voice received the due measure of attention. Vocal training was not at this time, nor indeed for several

\* Cf. Vol. I, pp 167-172.

## VOCAL CULTURE IN MEDLÆVAL EUROPE

centuries later, thought to require any very close attention. It was simply an incident in the general musical education. The demands made on the voice were slight in comparison with the requirements of the music of a few centuries later. Music had long been strictly unisonic in character, but about the time of Guido the need of some addition to a single melody began to be noted.

A peculiarity of the single voice is the fact that while capable of singing melodies of an almost infinite variety it seems to the cultured ear to need support of some kind. While untutored people are content to listen to the singing of a voice without any accompaniment, a certain degree of culture brings with it a sense of bareness conveyed by a performance of this kind. Toward the close of the dark ages this feature of the voice attracted the attention of the church musicians. They hit upon the device of having a second voice accompany the first, singing another melody which should have a pleasing effect in conjunction with the original one. This marked the beginning of counterpoint, and it gave a direction to the art of music from which it did not depart for many centuries.

With the gradual extension of polyphonic writing the education of singers became constantly a more complex and exacting matter. Greater demands were made on both the voice and the musicianship of the choral singer. No great modification was, however, made in the system of instruction; this developed along the lines already marked out for it. Sight singing continued to be the basis of musical education. As time went on it became necessary for the singers to master the system of musical notation, and this was accomplished by a farther extension of the course in sight singing. An understanding of the rules of counterpoint was not obligatory on the part of the choristers, but many of them received sufficient instruction

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to fit them for both composition and teaching. Composers and teachers were without exception graduates of the choir schools; a musical education could not be obtained elsewhere. Music study had indeed no other purpose than to train students in the music of the church. Instruction in counterpoint and composition was not undertaken until the students had mastered the rudiments of music and had also received their vocal training in the sight singing classes. Every musician was a singer as a matter of course.

Musical culture gradually spread from the church and began to embrace a wider field. During the 15th and the 16th centuries there was a steady approximation of the two orders of music, scholarly and popular. Every little royal and princely court had its retinue of musicians. Polyphonic music had reached a degree of development where its beauty brought it within the reach of the enjoyment of the great mass of the people.

Composers had, indeed, begun to write secular 'art' music as early as the thirteenth century. As civilization and culture advanced, and secular music received a constantly greater measure of attention, the demands made on lay musicians became more exacting. The old fashion of singing and playing entirely by ear no longer sufficed for the requirements of cultured people. Musicians were obliged to fit themselves for their profession by obtaining a fair degree of technical knowledge. Many who had enjoyed the training of the choir schools forsook their employment in the church and devoted themselves to the practice of secular music.

The field of musical education also broadened. People who looked forward to embracing the musical profession began to seek instruction from graduates of the choir schools. But the idea of private instruction did not become popular for a long time. Music had always been taught in special schools, and the need of such schools of a secular character soon became mani-

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fest. The first institution of this type to attain any degree of prominence was that founded in Bologna in 1482 by a Spanish musician, Ramis di Pareja. It adopted the system of instruction followed in the choir schools. The century following the establishment of the Bologna school was one of great activity in secular musical instruction. Conservatories were founded in most of the great European cities, although Italy was the chief centre of education in music.

Polyphonic music had been steadily progressing and, at the period we have now reached (the sixteenth century), its proper performance called for singers of no mean ability. The traditional system of musical education had steadily expanded and had without difficulty kept abreast of the demands made on it. The strictly musical education of the singer required a longer and more exacting course of study, and so also did the technical training of the voice. Composers of this period showed a marked fondness for florid counterpoint and voices had to be cultivated to a high point of flexibility to sing their works satisfactorily.

Yet no sweeping alteration was made in the system of vocal cultivation. Flexibility of voice was acquired through practice in the singing of individual parts of contrapuntal works, those being chosen which presented technical difficulties in a convenient form. This advanced stage of vocal training was undertaken only after the rudimentary principles of singing had been mastered in the sight-singing classes. In spite of the greater technical demands made on the voice, the proper management of the vocal organs was not seen to involve a problem of any difficulty. Sight singing classes numbered sometimes as many as forty pupils. The instructor in this primary grade was expected to see that the students sang clearly and in tune, and that they avoided the faults of nasality and throatiness. To the matter of tone production the teacher could of



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course pay very little attention, as the rudiments of music were the main subject of study. Yet the few hints and corrections occasionally given by the sight-singing teacher were all the instruction that the students received in the management of the voice. On the completion of the course in sight singing the students were expected to produce their voices properly, as well as to sing difficult music at sight. No pupil could be admitted to the classes for advanced instruction in singing whose voice was not properly controlled.

### IV

Up to the latter part of the sixteenth century there was nothing to give promise of a sudden development of solo singing. Popular music had as a matter of fact consisted from time immemorial largely of singing by a single voice. The musical instincts of the great mass of the people had found expression in the folk-song, while the semi-cultured classes had long cultivated the arts of the various orders of Troubadours and Minnesingers. But these popular forms of music were looked upon by the trained musicians with a certain contempt. Music had to be sung in parts by several voices in order to be worthy of recognition as serious art. Polyphonic music utterly ignores the capabilities of beauty and expressiveness inherent in the single voice. When several melodies are sung at once, each one of equal importance with all the others, it is impossible for one voice to receive more attention than another. Yet a time came when music was forced to break the bonds of polyphony and free itself from the restraints imposed upon it by multiple part-writing. Greater command of beauty and expressiveness was precisely the end sought by those composers, notably Palestrina, whose work marks the culmination of the polyphonic school. The spirit of the time was seeking for greater

## THE REVIVAL OF SOLO SINGING

freedom in the expression of the musical instinct and singers and musicians alike were moved by this spirit. Solo singing was the inevitable result of a pressing demand.

Two entirely distinct sets of influences were instrumental in leading musicians to experiment with the solo voice. The first of these can be traced back to the practising of individual parts in choral works as a medium of vocal cultivation. A singer practising a part of this kind by himself could not fail to notice that he used his voice with greater freedom and satisfaction than when obliged to consider only the effect of his voice in conjunction with other singers. So also would the master who was instructing him in his part. Highly significant is the fact that this discovery was made in the singing of florid music. Rather elaborate passages of the florid type were selected for vocal practice and these would naturally be adapted for bringing out the purely sensuous beauty of the voice. Florid counterpoint thus contained within itself the germs of coloratura singing. As singers began to recognize the beauties of their own individual voices, the desire naturally arose to display these beauties to others. Opportunity for vocal display was, however, lacking, as no music had ever been written for the solo voice. This difficulty was finally overcome by a singer performing only one part of a contrapuntal work and having the other parts played as an accompaniment by instrumental performers. The first solos sung in the history of European musical art were of this type. As early as 1539 a four-part madrigal was produced in this manner, the highest soprano part being sung as a solo. The fashion spread rapidly and solo singing soon began to attract the serious attention of musicians.\*

\* For a fuller treatment of this phase of musical history, the rise of 'monody,' see Vol. I, chapters IX and XI.

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Singers were of course anxious to exhibit their voices. Polyphonic music offered them little scope in this regard, for florid writing was distributed among the various parts and it was impossible for the artists to find works which contained more than an occasional ornamental passage for any one voice. They hit naturally upon the device of adding ornaments according to their own taste and fancy to the part selected for solo performance. Kiesewetter reproduces a madrigal sung in this manner by a noted soprano singer, Vittoria Archilei, in 1589. Both the original soprano part and the same part as embellished by Archelei are reproduced here.

a. Simple melody of treble part



b. Melody as sung by Vittoria Archilei



Vocal ornamentation had by this time become a recognized fashion among the singers. Considerable mystery surrounds the origin of the various ornaments and florituri which were adopted by the singers at this early period in the history of solo singing. A possible source from which they may have been drawn was mentioned in our remarks on the music of the Temple at Jerusalem. Much of this music was preserved by tradition and was incorporated, with modifications of course, in the ritual of the Greek Catholic church at Constantinople. Highly ornamental in character, it was performed regularly in the Greek church

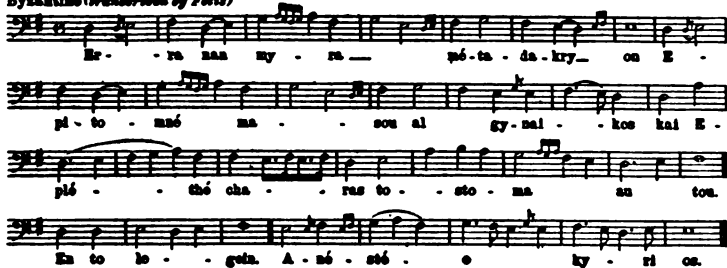
## RISE OF COLORATURA SINGING

for many centuries. At the dispersal of the cultured Greeks following the capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1452, many musicians trained in the music of the Greek church found their way into Italy. This gradual exodus continued indeed for many years, and it is probable that the traditions of ornamental music thus came to the knowledge of the Italian singers. Certain it is that the early singers adopted the same type of ornamentation which had been perfected at Jerusalem nearly 2,000 years previously. Exactly the same variety of turns, trills, runs, *gruppetti*, etc., are contained in the following examples of Hebrew and Greek music as were employed by the solo singers at the close of the sixteenth century.

### Hebrew (transcribed by Félics)



### Byzantine (transcribed by Félics)



It is not necessary, however, to speculate on the causes which led the first solo singers to adorn their songs with *florituri*. Ornamental singing has always been a natural and instinctive form of expression. The

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fondness of primitive peoples for vocal embellishments has been noted by many observers, prominent among whom is Frederick R. Burton ('American Primitive Music,' New York, 1909). In the Orient singing of the florid type has always had its home. Returning Crusaders brought back with them many songs and melodies from Palestine, all characterized by runs, turns, and other ornaments. The fashion was taken up by the Troubadours and Trouvères, who familiarized their hearers with the idea of melodic elaboration by means of florid passages. Even in the church the officiating priests for many centuries had a fondness for introducing ornaments in their singing of the masses. Ornamental singing seems to be prompted by some deep-seated instinct and its universal popular appeal must be attributed to the same instinct.

Coloratura singing was thus the foundation of the new art of vocal solo performance. Musical historians generally attach more importance in this connection to the invention of dramatic recitative. This is due in great measure to the fact that the records deal much more fully with the latter subject, and also to the adoption of declamatory recitative as the basis of the art form of opera.\* Solo singing owed its sudden and unprecedented bound into popularity to the delight which people took in vocal ornamentation. Even the opera itself was indebted for its rapid advance to the public demand for coloratura singing. Indeed it seems hardly too much to say that coloratura singing was the first type of art music to find its way to the affections of the general public.

Up to about 1600, artistic music, despite its rapid development in the hundred years preceding, had been the possession only of the cultured and wealthy classes. But with the opening of the opera houses the new art form was brought within the reach of the great body

\* Cf. Vol. I, chap. XI.

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of the people. That the public responded so enthusiastically to the new form of entertainment thus offered them was due in great measure to the delight people took in coloratura singing. Composers soon found that in order to please the public they must provide ornamental solos for the singers. This was of course opposed to the views of the little group of Florentine gentlemen who projected the first performances of opera; they considered musical declamation to be sufficient for all the purposes of a truly dramatic art. But the public thought otherwise and demanded to hear the singers in solos which displayed the full beauties of their voices. Monteverdi's *Orfeo*, produced in 1607, contains a number of elaborate coloratura songs.

A striking fact regarding the system of vocal instruction in vogue during the later decades of the sixteenth century is that it sufficed for the training of the first solo singers. Artists whose education had not been designed to fit them for the performance of solo music were yet able to take up this music and to sing it satisfactorily after they had left their teachers. Even though it was intended only for the performance of choral works, the system of vocal training then in vogue enabled singers to master the new art of solo singing for themselves. The advance of solo singing did not lead to the abandonment of the traditional course of instruction. On the contrary, the same system continued to be applied, extended only to meet the new requirements imposed on it by the great elaboration of vocal technique. By 1650 coloratura singing was firmly established as the favorite branch of music, and for more than 200 years following it was one of the chief glories of the art.

An abundance of singers of a high degree of excellence were provided by the conservatories and by the many private teachers who practised their profession in the chief cities of Italy. The most famous musicians

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did not disdain to embrace the new profession of voice culture. A sincere devotion to the art of *bel canto* was displayed by the teachers of the early part of the seventeenth century; each one strove to advance the standards of singing, to discover new possibilities of beauty, range, and flexibility in the voice, to invent new and delightful ornaments. The composers vied with the vocal teachers in seeking always for greater beauty and expressiveness. How successful they were is proved by the rapid expansion of the opera.

A marked influence in the elevation of the standards of singing was exerted through the introduction of the male soprano voice. Whether the voices of the *castrati* possessed all the wonderful charm and beauty of quality attributed to them by musical writers of the time we cannot now determine. But there is no question that voices of this type are specially favored in their ability to master the most astounding technical difficulties. The *castrati* enjoyed an almost incredible popularity. More has been written about Farinelli and Caffarelli than about any other artists of the old *bel canto* period. Historically considered, the singers of this type are highly important because of the contribution they made to the elevation of the vocal art. Their achievements became the standard toward which all other artists were called upon to strive. While we need have no regret over the disappearance of the male soprano, his value in the development of *bel canto* cannot be ignored.

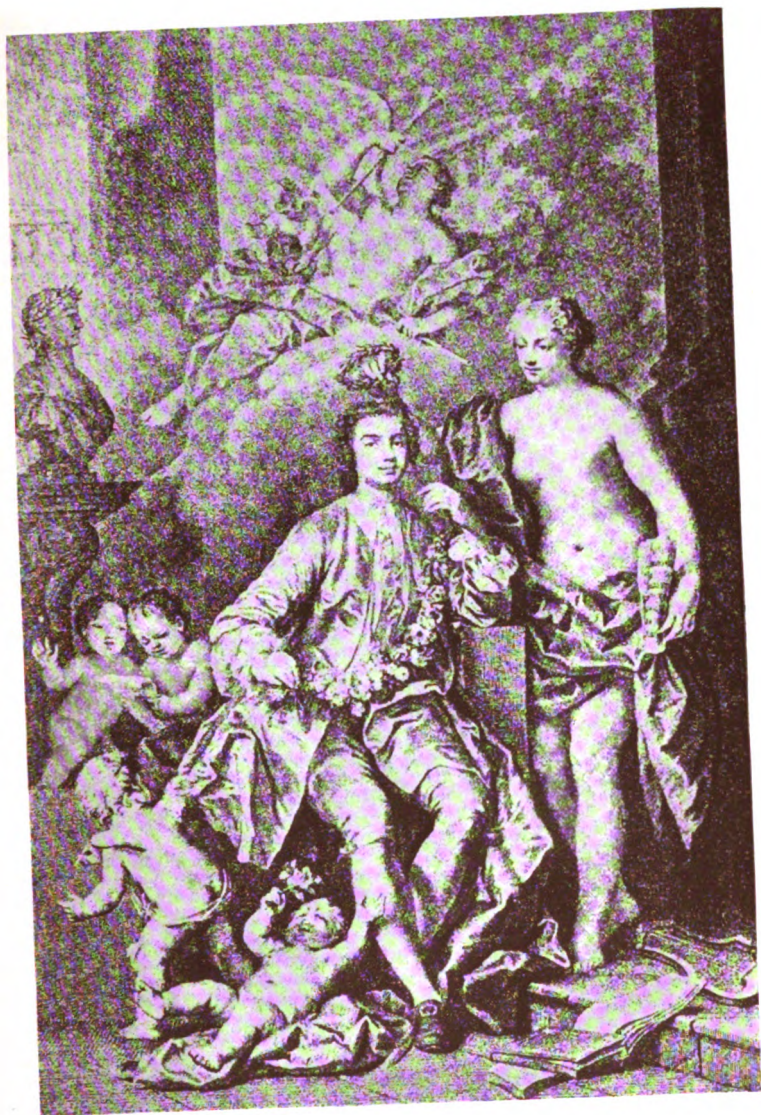
A lineal succession of vocal teachers was well established by 1630. Several masters of the art had acquired excellent reputations even so early as 1600. Each famous teacher had many pupils who in their turn took up the profession of teaching and who almost invariably based their claims to recognition on the reputation of the master, as well as on their own excellence as singers. This maestral succession, or

**Apotheosis of Farinelli**

*From an engraving by Wagner after the contemporaneous painting by  
Amicori*









## THE OLD ITALIAN METHOD

rather many of them, continued down to comparatively recent times. The changed conditions which came about in the twenty years following the invention of the laryngoscope (1855) finally broke down the influence of the teachers who had inherited the old masters' system, and the authority of the old method was for a time almost destroyed. In recent years, however, there has been a great revival of interest in the methods of instruction followed by the old masters. There is a growing feeling that scientific methods have not fulfilled their promise, and vocalists look back upon the earlier centuries of voice culture as a golden age which has passed away.

### V

The old Italian method is now considered to have possessed some merits which are not shared by modern scientific systems. Yet a certain degree of mystery still surrounds the old method. Welcome as its revival would be to many teachers and students, great difficulty is met with in determining of just what it consisted. Many analyses and explanations of the old method have indeed been suggested. But as these consist almost entirely of attempts to find in it some means for the direct conscious management of the vocal organs, they have necessarily brought forth little that is of value. All the mystery surrounding the old method is dispelled by the understanding that it did not treat the vocal problem as capable of solution by mechanical means.

The old Italian method was simply an amplification of the system of vocal education which had been in course of development for nearly a thousand years. It embodied no new conception of vocal management, but continued to treat the control of the voice as a purely instinctive matter. Its chief contribution to

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the technical training of the voice was the adoption of *vocalises* and exercises specially designed for this purpose. Even that was a matter of rather slow development. During the early decades of the seventeenth century vocal teachers continued to select passages from standard musical works which lent themselves readily to the technical exercise of the voice, just as the teachers of the preceding century had done. Gradually it came to be seen that greater satisfaction could be obtained from the use of compositions arranged to bring in the various technical points and vocal embellishments one or two at a time. Thus the voice could be led by an easy gradation to the mastery of every technical difficulty and its training was rendered easier and more expeditious.

But the general scheme of instruction continued to be patterned after the traditional model. A complete musical education, not only the special cultivation of the voice, was the goal. The plan of combining the preliminary training in vocal management with instruction in the rudiments of music continued to be followed as late as 1750. Many famous masters employed assistant teachers to perform the drudgery of the initial stages of instruction, considering that their own high degree of culture entitled them to deal only with advanced students. This custom continued for at least one hundred years, and Tosi (1723) speaks of it as a system so well established as to need no comment.

It is sometimes said that a course of instruction in singing according to the old Italian method required from five to seven years of study. This is in one sense true. Yet it is by no means the case that so long a time was devoted to the technical training of the voice. A thorough musical education was included in this course, of which the first two or three years were spent entirely on the rudiments of music. The course of instruction included also a complete training for the

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operatic stage, as well as a repertoire of parts sufficient to enable the graduating student to secure an engagement at one of the opera houses. In the latter part of the eighteenth century specialization in vocal education began to be the rule. Students whose parents foresaw for them the possibilities of a vocal career were prepared by a thorough musical education before being sent to a vocal teacher. Under these circumstances the technical training of the voice was frequently accomplished in less than two years.

### VI

It is to be regretted that so little mention is made by musical historians of the methods of instruction followed by the old masters. Vocal teachers of the old school seem to have been so absorbed in their work that the idea of writing books seldom occurred to them. A vast quantity of *vocalises* composed by teachers for their students has been preserved and many of these are incorporated in books of exercises now available. A few masters were, however, thoughtful enough to provide posterity with some knowledge of their system of instruction. The first of these was Caccini, whose importance as a vocal teacher should not be overlooked on account of his especial eminence as the first composer to write music for the solo voice.

In 1601 Caccini published a large number of his compositions for the solo voice under the title of *Le Nuove Musiche*, a book which is now of almost inestimable value. It contains vocal pieces in both the styles then in vogue. It is surprising to see from some of these florid songs the high degree of vocal virtuosity possessed by the singers of that early time. In his preface Caccini gives an outline of his system of vocal training. This consists entirely of rules and directions for the execu-

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tion of the various ornaments of singing. Here he shows himself to have possessed a pure and refined taste, as well as a most profound love for the beauties of the voice. Yet he does not touch on the subject of



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vocal management, proving that he had not had occasion to depart from the instinctive methods in which he himself had been trained.

Two other interesting works by teachers of the old school are 'Observations on the Florid Song' (1723), by Pietro Francesco Tosi, and *Riflessioni Pratiche sul Canto Figurato* (1776), by Giovanni Battista Mancini. Both these writers devote themselves mainly to a discussion of vocal embellishments and *florituri*, just as did Caccini so many years earlier. What little they say about the management of the voice shows that the old idea of reliance on instinctive vocal guidance had not weakened in their day.

Another highly valuable work, the latest which can be considered of original value in throwing light on the old Italian method, is the *Méthode de Chant du Conservatoire de Musique* (Paris, 1803). This method was drawn up by the most eminent musicians in Paris at that time, including even Cherubini and Méhul. They and several others of almost equal rank were commissioned by the revolutionary government to devise an official system of vocal education. Yet there is nothing revolutionary about the method, for it does not depart in any important particular from the system of instruction described by Tosi and Mancini.

Particular interest attaches to the *Méthode* because it was the first complete practical work on its subject ever published. Tosi and Mancini did not include a single exercise or musical illustration in their books, but contented themselves with verbal descriptions of the portamento, messa di voce, appoggiatura, etc. The *Méthode* on the other hand consists almost entirely of a collection of exercises, scales, vocalises, and arias, carefully graded according to difficulty. These were collected from many sources by the most celebrated vocal teacher in Paris at that time, Bernardo Mengozzi, the head of the vocal department at the Conservatoire.



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Everything necessary for the thorough cultivation of the voice according to Mengozzi's conception of the subject was included in the *Méthode*. A student was expected to start with the first exercise and study each one consecutively, the voice steadily progressing until technical perfection was assured with the mastery of the last aria. No distinction was made between voices, high and low, male and female, for all were put through the same course of study. Cherubini thought so highly of the *Méthode* that he took a copy with him on his visit to Vienna in 1805 for the purpose of himself presenting it to Beethoven.

All that has come down to us of the oral traditions of the old school is summed up in a set of cogent phrases which are commonly known as the traditional precepts. These are, 'open the throat,' 'sing on the breath,' 'sing the tone forward,' and 'support the tone.' No literary authority can be given for the precepts, as they are not mentioned in any works published earlier than about 1830. It is possible that they do not date back much further than this. Perhaps they represent the first attempts made by vocal teachers to interpret their instruction according to the scientific ideas of vocal operation which were just beginning to become current about that time.

How this could have been the case is readily seen. A perfect vocal tone sounds as though it floats on the breath. The correct singer's throat seems to the hearer to be loose and open and the tone seems to be lodged in the front of the mouth. When the attention of vocal teachers began to be turned to the mechanical operations of tone production they might naturally have been led to observe first those salient features of tone which seem to point to a definite vocal action.

Yet it is more likely that the old masters actually used the precepts in instruction merely to point out to their pupils these striking peculiarities in the sound of

## THEORETICAL BASIS OF THE ITALIAN METHOD

the perfect vocal tone. We know that they always held up before their students a high ideal of artistic singing. A use of the precepts in this way would be of great service in helping the students to hear how perfect singing should sound. To imitate successfully it is necessary in the first place to hear distinctly. Pointing out the marked characteristics of the perfect tone enables the ear to know what to listen for.

It must be borne in mind that the old Italian method was never standardized. No such thing as a school of recognized authority, to whose principles all teachers were obliged to adhere, was ever evolved. Each master taught according to his own ideas, and no central authority or governing body ever undertook to lay out a standard method. Yet the old masters all followed the same general plan of instruction. In some of its aspects this plan is thoroughly understood. Students were taught to sing correctly and artistically solely through the exercise of their voices in actual singing. The materials used for vocal training were scales, exercises, and vocalises without and with words. These were without exception melodious, and the musical and artistic aspects of singing received attention from the beginning of instruction to the end. Singing was considered always on its *musical* side and its *mechanical* features were never touched upon. The voice was led on by a gradual progression from the easy to the difficult.

During the seventeenth century it was the custom for the teachers to compose exercises and vocalises specially for each pupil, suiting the technical and musical requirements to the pupil's stage of advancement. As this custom died out, teachers provided themselves with extensive and carefully graded lists of compositions in all the various styles suitable for instruction.

Coming finally to the question, what means the old masters utilized for imparting the correct management

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of the voice, we find that in the sense in which this problem is understood in modern vocal science they had no method whatever. It is difficult for one imbued with the idea of direct vocal management to believe that the voice can possibly be trained without the student knowing in the first place how to produce his tones correctly. Yet it would have been equally hard for a master of the old school to understand what we moderns mean by the conscious control of the vocal organs. It never entered into the minds of the old masters that there could be any difficulty about the management of the voice. 'Listen and imitate' summed up for them all that need be known, indeed all that could be known on the subject. They aimed directly at tonal perfection as a matter of sound and did not think of attempting to reach it by the roundabout course of vocal mechanics.

The early teachers of the old school were the direct inheritors of the traditions stored up as the result of the experiences of vocal instructors through a period of many centuries. During all this time the voice had been allowed to operate according to its own instincts. Although in the last century of this period the rapid advance of the musical arts had imposed demands of constantly increasing difficulty on the voice, it continued to fulfill these demands in its own instinctive way. The ability of the voice to produce the tones exacted of it by the ear was never doubted. There was no need for a vocal teacher of the old school to formulate or justify his belief in the voice's ability to follow the guidance of the ear. No one at that time had ever thought of questioning this ability. Yet if one of these masters had been called upon to state in doctrinal form his theory of the vocal action, it would probably have been something like this:

The correct use of the voice, that manner of vocal emission which leads through practice to technical per-

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fection, is naturally acquired by exercise in the actual singing of correct tones. Provided the student have a clear mental conception of the type of vocal tone which results from a correct manner of tone production, the voice will gradually adapt itself to the correct form of action, through repeated efforts at imitating the correct tone as a matter of sound. In order to practise singing effectively it is necessary only that the ear shall be acquainted with the sound of a properly produced tone and that it shall demand tones of this character from the voice. Faults of production, whether throaty, nasal, or breathy tones be the result, will gradually disappear as the student learns to hear his own voice with greater keenness and accuracy. The correct use of the voice is gradually acquired and there is no time in the course of this progress at which any change takes place in the manner of directing and guiding the voice.

A high standard of musical beauty and vocal excellence was always kept prominently before the minds of the pupils. The students were required to know how a correctly sung passage should sound, and all their practice was aimed at the imitation of this sound. The ear was expressly recognized as the sole judge of vocal correctness. When a pupil sang incorrectly the master would imitate the faulty tones, for the pupil to hear what was wrong in the sound. Then the master would sing the passage correctly, that the pupil might hear the perfect tones and adopt them as a model for imitation.

So far as our present knowledge of the old method goes, it embodied no definitely stated principles for the management of the voice. Although the problem of tone production is, in present estimation, the most important topic of voice culture, the older system seems to have ignored this problem completely. It simply took for granted that the voice will operate correctly if it is guided by a keen ear and directed by a fine musical

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**and artistic sensibility. No doubt it had its failures, but we have a record only of its successes. These were so many and so brilliant that we must accord to the old Italian method the recognition due to a complete and satisfactory system of voice culture.**

## CHAPTER III

### MODERN SCIENTIFIC METHODS OF VOICE CULTURE

The transition from the old to the modern system; historical review of scientific investigation; Manuel Garcia; progress of the scientific idea; Helmholtz, Mandl, and Merkel—Diversity of practices in modern methods; the scientific system; breathing; laryngeal action; registers; resonance; emission of tone; the singer's sensations; correction of faults; articulation—General view of modern voice culture.

#### I

STUDENTS of the history of voice culture usually consider that the invention of the laryngoscope (1855) marks the beginning of the modern scientific system of training the voice. It is of course convenient to have a precise date to which any important change in human beliefs can be referred. Yet in this matter it is hardly possible to fix upon any one event as the only influence which brought about the change. As a matter of fact, there was a gradual and for a time almost imperceptible transition from the so-called empirical methods of the old school to the modern methods.

Scientific investigation of the vocal mechanism began, so far as the record shows, with Hippocrates, 460 B. C. His work on anatomy contains references to the vocal organs, showing that he had some ideas, rather vague it is true, about their structure. Aristotle (384 B. C.) recognized the larynx as the point of production of the voice. Galen (130 A. D.) wrote a valuable treatise on the anatomy of the throat. He gave the name of glottis to the space between the vocal cords, and his work was the standard authority on the subject for more than fifteen hundred years. Fabricius

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of Aquapendente, 1537, published a work embodying the results of his own dissections of the throat. He added greatly to the materials of Galen, although his ideas of the operations of tone production were hardly so sound as those of his classic predecessor.

In 1741 a French physician, Ferrein, published a little treatise entitled *De la Formation de la Voix de l'Homme*. This marks the beginning of the modern interest in the subject of the vocal action, as it was the first work on vocal physiology to receive any attention from those interested in singing. Among other things Ferrein gave the name of vocal cords to the edges of the muscles inclosing the glottis.

Dutrochet in 1806 compared the action of the glottis to that of the lips in playing the horn. He asserted that the sonorous vibrations of vocal sounds are generated by the muscles whose edges are formed by the vocal cords, and not by the vocal cords alone. Liscovius, in 1814, and Savart, in 1825, also published treatises, but their work served rather to foster the growing interest in the subject than to add anything of value to the general fund of knowledge. Johannes Müller, in 1837, showed that a compass of two octaves can be obtained by forcing air through an excised larynx and varying the tension of the vocal cords.

In the early years of the nineteenth century the results of scientific investigation of the voice began to attract the attention of the most enlightened vocal teachers. There was indeed no dissatisfaction with the methods of instruction then in vogue. Yet a general feeling can be noted by a student of the literature of the subject as setting in about that time, a feeling that systems of voice culture might be improved by applying to them the results of the most recent scientific discoveries. Two important works by vocal teachers may be cited in this connection, *Die Kunst des Gesanges*, by Adolph Bernhard Mark (1826), and *Die grosse ital-*

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*ienische Gesangschule*, by Heinrich F. Mannstein (1834). In both of these books the point of view generally held at that time is clearly indicated. While the old Italian method was held to be thoroughly satisfactory in every respect, there is a desire to explain this method and to place it on an assured basis of demonstrated scientific principles. No thought of direct vocal management as a necessity, or even as a possibility, can be discovered in these two works.

Manuel Garcia (1805-1906), the vocal teacher who contributed most to the promulgation of the scientific idea, had at the beginning of his career exactly the same plan as Mannstein and Mark. His father, Manuel del Popolo Visconti, was one of the most eminent musicians of the time. Famous as singer, teacher, impresario, and composer, the older Garcia was in possession of all the traditions of the Italian school. From his father Garcia received the traditional method in its entirety. Retiring from the operatic stage in 1832, Garcia took up actively the profession of voice culture. Even as early as this he had definitely formulated a plan for the improvement of vocal methods. Yet at that time he had in mind nothing of the nature of a sweeping change. In the preface to his first important work, *École de Garcia*, 1847, he stated that his intention was 'to reproduce my father's method, attempting only to give it a more theoretical form, and to connect results with causes.'

With this seemingly modest program Garcia could not rest content. His ambition to penetrate all the mysteries of the voice led him to master the anatomy of the throat, as well as what was then known of acoustics. He was impatient to know what actually takes place in the larynx during the production of tone. After several years of experimenting he finally succeeded in viewing his own vocal cords by means of a little mirror held in the back of the throat. His an-



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nouncement of his invention was published in the proceedings of the Royal Society of London in May, 1855.

By this time the idea of the improvement of voice culture was very generally held. Garcia's invention was hailed as the beginning of a new era in vocal instruction. It was coming also to be generally felt that the only way in which the scientific knowledge of the voice could be utilized in instruction would be by having the student of singing cause his vocal organs to operate in the manner that science had shown to be correct. While no one at that time stated this principle in definite terms, it was generally assumed as a matter of course. Within the twenty years following Garcia's invention the doctrine of the scientific management of the voice had been almost universally adopted. Against this tacit conviction in favor of the necessity of direct vocal management the instinctive methods of the old masters could make no stand. The old method gradually disappeared and the doctrine implied in the empirical system—that the voice needs no guidance other than that furnished by the ear—found no defenders. Since 1875 the belief in the necessity of consciously governing the vocal organs has been the dominating idea of vocal students and teachers throughout the world.

Of importance only second to Garcia's study of the vocal cord action was Helmholtz's analysis of the acoustic laws of resonance, especially as they apply to tone and vowel formation. Merkel's *Der Kehlkopf* (1873) is the standard work on the operations of the larynx. Dr. Louis Mandl, in *Die Gesundheitslehre der Stimme* (1876), first announced the principle of breath control. A vast number of other investigators have contributed to the subject and it is safe to say that the vocal action has been studied from every conceivable point of view. It is, however, not necessary here to trace the development of vocal science and to record

Manuel Garcia

*From a sketch from life by Pauline Viardot*







## DIVERSITY OF MODERN METHODS

the work of each student who has made original contributions to the common fund of knowledge.

### II

In our first chapter the generally accepted theories regarding the operations of the vocal mechanism were outlined, and the same plan will be followed in describing the scientific methods of instruction most widely adopted. Modern methods of voice culture have indeed never been standardized. While teachers generally have adopted very nearly the same course, there is a wide diversity of opinion and practice to be found concerning each one of the topics of vocal science. Almost every one of these topics has indeed been the subject of controversy. Yet within recent years the leading authorities have come into fair accord in their application of the various principles. We shall therefore describe the method which has in its favor a consensus of opinion on the part of the best recognized teachers, without offering any statement as to its soundness or adequacy.

First it will be necessary to point out the exact position which the scientific element occupies in the modern system of voice culture. Vocal science has never aimed at a complete revolution of the practices of instruction in singing. Its purpose is rather to divide this instruction into two stages and to take as its province only the first stage. Starting with the well known fact that the voice has only one correct mode of operating, it seeks to impart this correct manner of tone production to the student as a preliminary to the technical training of the voice, strictly speaking. This is the only important point in which the modern system differs from the old Italian method. The initial work of imparting the correct vocal action is commonly called the 'placing of the voice.' To accomplish this is

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the sole purpose of vocal science, and the scientific method of instruction is designed only to apply to this initial stage. When the correct management of the voice has been acquired through a course of instruction according to scientific principles, the student is held to be ready to undertake the technical and musical education of the singer. This second stage of instruction is conducted almost exactly according to the system of the old masters.

Four elements are included in the scientific system of vocal training. These follow naturally the four distinct operations of singing—breathing, laryngeal action, resonance, and articulation.

Exercises designed to impart the correct manner of breathing are usually given first as toneless gymnastic drills. The student is instructed to fill the lungs in a prescribed fashion (generally that described in Chapter I), and to make sure that the expansion of abdomen and chest takes place exactly according to rule. Practice in the muscular control of the expiration is combined with these preliminary breathing exercises, so soon as they can be performed with fair facility. When the muscular movements of breathing have been mastered as a toneless exercise, the practice is extended to exercises combined with tones, on single notes and scale passages. In these attention is paid to the proper attack and emission of the tone, as well as to the correct management of the breath. A great variety of breathing exercises have been formulated, but as their basic principle is always the same they call for no extended description. Any one of an athletic turn who has himself mastered the correct manner of breathing would have no difficulty in devising exercises suitable for imparting this system to others.

To secure the proper action of the vocal cords and laryngeal muscles the entire throat must be held in a state of supple relaxation before attacking a tone or

## THE 'SCIENTIFIC' SYSTEM

phrase. In order to start a tone correctly a full inspiration is to be taken, then the vocal cords are to be brought to the degree of tension necessary for the desired pitch at the precise instant the expiration starts. The tone must be attacked squarely on the correct pitch and no breath allowed to escape before it starts. The breath pressure is to be held evenly and correctly managed throughout the entire expiration.

To secure this proper action of the vocal cords the so-called 'stroke of the glottis' was advocated by Garcia. The glottic stroke is an explosive sound, formed when the vocal cords are forced apart suddenly by a rather powerful breath pressure. Its most frequent natural occurrence is in the action of coughing, of which it is the most striking auditory characteristic. Although command of the glottic stroke can be acquired without difficulty, it is utterly out of place in finished singing. What Garcia had in mind in advocating the glottic stroke is declared by many of his graduate students to have been something entirely different from a violent explosion of the tone. All he sought was the starting of the tone without any previous escape of the breath. The stroke of the glottis, strictly so called, has been almost entirely abandoned by vocal teachers. Later authorities modified this instruction somewhat by teaching the 'slide of the glottis,' which brings about the same action without the explosive sound of the glottic stroke. Of recent years, owing to the better understanding of the principles of breath control, it has been found that neither the stroke nor the slide of the glottis is necessary. The same result can be reached by bringing the vocal cords to the desired degree of tension at the instant the expiration starts.

Much attention has been paid to the subject of registers, more probably than to any other feature of the vocal action. For a long time it was considered that



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each register of the voice must be trained separately and controlled in a special way. Various statements have been made by laryngoscopic observers as to the number of the registers and the actions of the vocal cords in each one.

At present the leading authorities recognize three registers, chest, medium, and head, corresponding to the lower, middle, and higher parts of the range of the voice. Individual voices vary in their possession of registers. Tenors usually have only the medium and head, the falsetto (confined generally to this voice) being in most cases of too effeminate a quality for use in artistic singing. Baritones usually have all three registers, basses only chest and medium. Sopranos may possess all three, although the chest register is seldom well developed in this voice. Mezzos have the chest and medium, and in the majority of cases the head register also. Contraltos possess the chest and medium, but very rarely the head register.

Teachers have in most cases discarded the plan of giving precise limits to the registers and training them separately. It is considered the best practice to bring about the correct action of the medium part of the voice, including command of the crescendo and diminuendo on the single tone, before beginning to develop the higher and lower portions of the range. The compass is then gradually extended upward and downward, care being taken to avoid the breaks which almost always resulted from the older system of training the registers separately.

Assistance is found in developing the low notes by the cultivation of chest resonance. High notes are helped by the use of nasal resonance and also by practice in attacking tones with the liquid or sonant consonants. Both these topics will be considered later.

Three resonance cavities have to be brought under

## REGISTERS, RESONANCE, TONE EMISSION

control, each of which acts independently of the others. These are the chest, the mouth-pharynx, and the nasal cavities. As a rule the influence of chest resonance is most marked in the lower part of the voice. The mouth-pharynx (in addition to its almost exclusive province of vowel and consonant formation) reinforces the entire range, and the nasal cavities contribute most to the high notes.

It must not be understood, however, that in artistic singing chest resonance is to be used only on low notes and nasal resonance on high notes. The special function of nasal resonance is believed to be the imparting of brilliancy, point, and carrying power to the tones. While its effect is more marked on the high notes, it must always be present in some degree throughout the entire compass of the voice. Breadth and sonority of tone are supposed to be contributed by chest resonance, and these must also be present on all loud tones, whether high, medium, or low.

Yet as brilliancy and point are more native to the high notes, nasal resonance is always more marked in this part of the voice. In the same way the qualities of tone due to chest resonance belong more properly to the lower and middle tones. On the practical side this is of great importance. It is vastly more easy to secure command of each form of resonance first in that part of the voice to which it is native. When this has been done it is a comparatively simple matter to extend this command higher or lower as the case may be.

It is the usual practice to begin instruction in the management of resonance with the mouth-pharynx cavity. For this purpose exercises on the vowel *ah* are generally first used. The position assumed by the tongue for this vowel is peculiarly favorable for securing an expansion of the lower part of the mouth-pharynx cavity. An increase in the size of this cavity is sought for the purpose of bringing about a corre-

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sponding increase in the volume and power of the tone.

While not directly a feature of mouth-pharynx resonance strictly speaking, the emission of the tone is usually treated under this head. After being generated by the vibration of the vocal cords, the tone is to be directed to the front of the mouth, in such manner that it impinges on the hard palate, just above the upper front teeth. This has for its purpose the freeing of the tone from the vocal cords and the bringing of it forward in the mouth, so as to secure the effect of 'forward tone' advocated by the old masters.

For acquiring the effect of forward tone, studies are also used on tones begun with certain labial and lingual consonants. Exercises are given on single tones on such syllables as *bah, bee, boo—ma, mee, mo—la, lee, lo*, etc. These are practised on notes covering a range of about one octave. Similar exercises are used for obtaining command of nasal resonance. For this purpose the consonant *n* is especially favored and exercises are used on syllables such as *na, nee, no*, etc.

Another means of acquiring command of the several forms of resonance is found in certain characteristic sensations which the singer experiences in singing tones of the various types. A tone strongly marked by nasal resonance awakens a sensation of tingling in the forehead and upper nose. A pronounced feeling of vibration in the upper chest, particularly in the region of the breast bone, accompanies the right use of chest resonance. The 'forward' tone is characterized by similar sensations in the front of the mouth. When practising exercises for acquiring command of resonance the student is instructed to feel the appropriate sensations, thus bringing the tone into the proper position.

Each form of resonance is particularly favored by certain vowels. *Oo* and *oh* lend themselves most readily to the acquirement of chest resonance. *Ee* facili-

## CORRECTION OF VOCAL FAULTS

tates in bringing in nasal resonance, while *ah* is the easiest vowel for obtaining command of the open throat and the forward tone, the most important functions of mouth-pharynx resonance.

Two marked forms of faulty tone production often call for special means of correction. These are the throaty and the unpleasantly nasal tone. For the cure of throaty production relaxing exercises are generally used. Sighing and yawning on the vowel *ah* with a free expiration furnish the basis of these exercises. Single tones and descending scale passages are practised in this manner, the breath being allowed to rush out freely and without control. Other directions are frequently given for the correction of throatiness. These include instruction in the support of the tone, the throat being relieved of pressure by a steady and controlled expiration. Bringing the tone forward in the mouth in the manner already described assists in this operation.

An excessive or a faulty use of nasal resonance is looked upon as the cause of the unpleasantly nasal tone. Too great a degree of relaxation of the muscles of the soft palate may bring about this condition. The means most favored for the correction of this fault are, first, muscular exercise in raising and lowering the soft palate, which gives a better tonicity to these muscles; and, second, the imparting of the correct idea of nasal resonance in the manner already described.

Another frequent fault of production, the tremolo, may result from any one of several causes. A lack of breath control may cause the expiratory pressure on the vocal cords to be unregulated and intermittent. Faulty methods of breathing, particularly those in which the upper chest is allowed to collapse at the start of the expiration, may lead to a flabby or 'wobbly' condition of the muscles which hold the larynx in place. A lack of support for the tone may result from

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the column of vocalized breath being directed backward, instead of toward its proper point of impact on the roof of the mouth.

For the cure of the tremolo the teacher must analyze in each individual case and locate the seat of the trouble. When this has been pointed out the fault is eradicated by applying the appropriate instruction—controlling the breath properly, placing the tone in the correct position in the mouth, etc.

A clear enunciation of the text is indispensable in artistic singing. This is in one sense not a feature of tone production strictly speaking. It is possible to enunciate with perfect distinctness and yet to use the voice very badly, as is seen in the case of many vaudeville singers. On the other hand, a correct production of tone may be exhibited by a singer whose enunciation is too indistinct to be understood. Yet it is the duty of the vocal teacher to train his pupils in the clear delivery of words, as well as in the other elements of the art of singing.

Special exercises and drills in the articulation of the various consonants are not widely used. Experience has shown that the same end can be attained, with vastly less of drudgery for the student, by paying attention to clearness of pronunciation in the singing of songs and exercises with words. Students sometimes have difficulty with some one or two vowels or consonants. In cases of this kind the master instructs the pupil in the correct position of the tongue, lips, etc., for the particular sound, and if necessary arranges special exercises for the purpose.

### III

How long a time should be allotted to a course in tone production along the lines just described it is not easy to state definitely. Practices in this regard vary

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greatly among vocal teachers. One reason for this is that tone production is seldom made the exclusive topic of study for any great length of time. Students of singing are generally eager to sing, and teachers are therefore obliged to intersperse their instruction in voice placing with songs and melodious vocalises. Another reason is found in the fact that the musical education of the student frequently devolves in great measure upon the vocal teacher. A knowledge of music, sufficient at least to enable the student to memorize songs and arias and to sing them in time and in tune, is absolutely necessary before the advanced education in the singer's art can be undertaken. When teachers are called upon to impart instruction of this kind, part of each lesson time must of course be used for the purpose.

While a strict application of the principles of vocal science would demand that the complete course in tone production be covered before even the simplest songs are attempted, this system is almost never carried out logically. The first few lessons are usually devoted to breathing and attack; from then on about half of each lesson time is spent on voice placing and half on songs. In the instruction given on the songs attention is paid to the more strictly musical elements of singing—style, delivery, interpretation, etc., as well as to the formation of the tones. Technical exercises of progressive difficulty are taken up about as soon as the student has acquired sufficient vocal control to perform them. As a rule there is no precise stage at which voice placing work strictly speaking ceases and the technical training of the voice is begun.

It cannot be said that any one teacher or vocal expert has founded an authoritative school of vocal science. There is not even anything in the nature of a distinctively national school. Closely resembling methods are followed in all European countries, as well

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as in America. Every famous modern master has imparted his principles to many students who in their turn have become teachers. Yet it is rather rare for any one to take up the profession of voice culture without first receiving some instruction from several recognized masters. This custom has resulted in a general levelling of systems, each teacher selecting what he considers best from all the methods which he investigates. Meanwhile the old Italian method is still recognized as possessing elements of great value, even in the department of tone production, in which its principles are so imperfectly understood by the scientifically disposed teacher. The great majority of teachers seek to apply some of the principles of the old method, notably its oral traditions, which were discussed a few pages back, in conjunction with the practices of vocal science.

Modern voice culture cannot be believed to have reached its final development. Even the most conscientious advocates of the scientific doctrines feel that there is a certain lack of completeness in present methods. Investigations are still being carried on in the various topics of vocal science. It is possible that the near future will see important discoveries in the means for control of laryngeal action and resonance. Some authorities, on the other hand, look altogether in the opposite direction. An abandonment of the doctrines of vocal science and a return to the instinctive methods of the old masters is favored by these teachers.

So far as the course of future events can be foretold, it seems probable that a combination of the two methods, now seemingly opposed, will eventually be brought about. The scientific investigation of the voice has brought to light so much of valuable truth that it would be ridiculous to throw its results lightly aside. At the same time the success of the old method proves that it contained a satisfactory solution of all vocal prob-

## **GENERAL VIEW OF MODERN VOICE CULTURE**

**lems. How the two methods will be fused into one it is not now possible to say. But the only marked tendency is in that direction. We are justified in the hope that its accomplishment will not be long postponed.**

**D. C. T.**



## CHAPTER IV

### THE NATURE AND ORIGIN OF SONG

The origin of song—The practical value of primitive song—The cultural value of primitive song—Biography of primitive song—The lyric impulse—Folk-song and art-song—Characteristics of the art-song; style, the singer and the song.

#### I

'In this or that Sicilian hamlet,' says the Countess Martinengo-Caesaresco in her 'Essays in the Study of Folk-Songs,' 'there is a man known by the name of "the Poet," or perhaps "the Goldfinch." He is completely illiterate and belongs to the poorest class; he is a blacksmith, a fisherman, or a tiller of the soil. If he has the gift of improvisation, his fellow-villagers have the satisfaction of hearing him applauded by the Great Public—the dwellers in all the surrounding hamlets assembled at the fair on St. John's Eve. Or it may be he is of a meditative turn of mind, and makes his poetry leisurely as he lies full length under the lemon-trees taking his noontide rest. Should you pass by, it is unlikely he will give himself the trouble of lifting his eyes. He could not say the alphabet to save his life; but the beautiful earth and skies and sea which he has looked on every day since he was born have taught him some things not learnt in school. The little poem he has made in his head is indeed a humble sort of poetry, but it is not unworthy of the praise it gets from the neighbors who come dropping into his cottage door, uninvited, but sure of a friendly welcome next Sunday after mass, their errand being to find out if the rumor

## THE ORIGIN OF SONG

is true that "the Goldfinch" has invented a fresh *canzona*? Such is the peasant poet of to-day; such he was five hundred or a thousand years ago.'

Here is the original singer. He has existed all over the world in every age, probably, since civilization began to dawn. We are very wrong in thinking of songs as normally written by special composers and sung by special singers in concert halls. Such a situation is not the usual but the unusual one. For, generally speaking, it is not special people who are singers but ordinary people. Artists have been in the habit of thinking that the world is divided into ordinary men and artists. William Morris startled them by declaring that ordinary men *are* artists—that to be artistic is the normal condition of ordinary men. It is only our materialistic civilization, he said, that has made men in-artistic. And historically, at least, he is quite right. It is only in recent times, and in certain nations, that it has come to be regarded as unusual that an ordinary man should be a singer. In all other ages, we may safely say, and in nearly all nations, it was regarded as unusual that an ordinary man should *not* be a singer. Singing has always been as natural to man as running, or whistling, or making love. It is only in these latter times that a man who sings for the joy of it is thought 'queer.'

The songs that have been written down on paper are of course only the smallest fraction of those that have been invented. It is a very unusual adventure for a song to get written down on paper. Not one out of a thousand experiences it. Most songs are 'made up' by some ordinary person at work or at play, remembered and repeated, imitated by some one else and changed a little and passed on. They live from mouth to mouth and in the hearts of people. Every nation, until it became too lettered and too self-conscious, had its songs of this kind, many of them beautiful

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enough to be known by thousands of people, some the property of only a few. In Italy investigators have recently noted down thousands of songs that never touched paper before, but they were only a tiny part of the songs that were passing from mouth to mouth. So it has been in every country. Greenland and Iceland have their songs which originated no one knows where or when. We possess folk-songs of China, Japan, and India. The phonograph has noted down hundreds of songs of the North American Indians. And every country in Europe has yielded songs innumerable.

We should be on our guard, then, against assuming that what we know as 'song literature'—the songs written by composers in their study and printed on paper before being sung—is any very considerable part of the song music of the world. It is merely the music chiefly at the disposal of highly educated people—principally because it is *printed*. And from a certain standpoint—that of the school-trained musician—it is perhaps the 'greatest' vocal music. But remember that the standpoint of the school-trained musician is only one standpoint. The conscious composer has chosen to look at his musical materials in a certain way and to judge the result accordingly. But by another test his work is inferior; in its power to move thousands of human hearts no song by Schubert or Schumann or Brahms can begin to equal 'Auld Lang Syne' or 'The Marseillaise.' Of necessity this book will be chiefly concerned with consciously composed 'art' music. But we should always remember that this is only because art music represents the great majority of all the music that has been noted down—and of course in a measure art songs at their best contain in a sublimated form the elements of folk-song.

The less civilized and conscious people are, the more readily they do their own singing. There is little spon-

## THE ORIGIN OF SONG

taneous song among us to-day and yet we can occasionally hear a workman humming an aimless tune under his breath. This was probably the normal state of things when men were less educated. Everybody was a composer, partly because it was easier to make up your own song than to remember somebody else's. Among the Indians songs were regarded in some tribes as the personal property of the person who invented them and were not to be sung by any one else unless that second person had acquired the rights in it by gift or inheritance. But generally, as people became somewhat more advanced, songs were freely appropriated from one singer to another. And each singer who borrowed generally added something of his own to the song—something to express his sense of beauty or artistic fitness: a more effective phrasing here, or a simpler group of notes there. Sometimes the song was so popular that it passed from tribe to tribe, or from nation to nation. In this case each people gave its individuality to the song, adding perhaps a little ornamentation if its nature was gay and volatile, or making the melody more regular and balanced if its soul was earnest and contemplative. Everywhere the races, the nations, and the tribes have shown their souls to us in their songs.

We must not suppose that these songs, which were so highly treasured, were elaborate. Sometimes they were made of no more than two or three tones of the scale. In thousands of songs there are no more than five tones and certain octave reduplications (as, for instance, in 'Auld Lang Syne'). In most cases the more primitive popular songs are too simple to make any impression upon us at all. But often that is our fault and not theirs. Our taste has been somewhat spoiled by highly seasoned food. After a little sympathetic study of primitive songs we find them full of eloquence and pathos.

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### II

But whether or not the early songs would please us now, they were of incalculable importance in the lives of early peoples. We are inclined to regard singing as an amusement only. We forget that it once had a practical importance that is hardly to be equalled by any single institution in modern life. Men were shut up within valleys, or tied by their work to the fields. It was by singing and poetry that they became citizens of the world. For, before the days of newspapers and postal service, it was the wandering bards who took the news from city to city, from court to court, from nation to nation. They served as historians, recording in verse the great events of their own nation and others, and passing the record down to succeeding generations. They served as public libraries, conserving the legend and sentiment of nations for the reference of others. More, they conserved the teaching of religious seers, the great unwritten laws of the nation, from fathers to children. In short, all that passed between nation and nation, and between generation and generation, was transmitted in song.

We wonder, of course, why these things happened in song, rather than in plain prose. But the answer is simple: verse is easier to remember than prose. All the stories, all the laws, all the culture of the nation had to be *remembered*. People's memories served instead of libraries. And with such a mass of matter to remember, people developed memories which are almost unbelievable to-day. To retain the equivalent of hundreds of pages of prose was of course impossible. But once throw the matter into verse and the remembering of it, to a primitive man, became comparatively simple. The whole of the Iliad and Odyssey were transmitted in this way through at least three centuries before they were committed to writing. For verse

**Illustration from the *Roman der Fauvel* (15th Cent.)**









## PRACTICAL VALUE OF PRIMITIVE SONG

somehow remembers itself; the sound remains even after the sense is gone. Prof. G. L. Kittredge, of Harvard, tells of some literary investigators in the Orient, who came upon a blind beggar. They asked him to recite poetry, and he started on a long epic of which he knew thousands of lines. It was not in the language of the time, but an old and strange tongue. They asked him what the lines meant. He did not know. He had heard them from his father, and had remembered them by the sound.

It was, then, of the highest importance that all knowledge that was to be preserved be cast in metrical form. A wandering minstrel was able to tell one country about the battles of another country by making a song about them. The nature of the Gods and the religious duties of men could be preserved for succeeding centuries because *Homer* made a poem out of them. And so poetry was a thing of incalculable value.

In these practical matters, of course, the music was not of the same importance as the words. We do not know, in fact, to what extent music entered into the reciting of the old poems. But it has been conjectured that even the longest poems, like the *Iliad*, were usually intoned and rose into something like a set melody in the more impassioned parts. Certainly the shorter poems always tended to find a tune for themselves. It is even quite likely that the bards invented words and tune at the same time. The long Robin Hood poems of England were usually sung and not spoken and we possess some of the curious tunes with which they were traditionally associated. Among the earlier minstrels much of the music was improvised in the course of the recitation, though as the poems became old and widely spread it is likely that they were associated with precise melodies or melodic motives. On the whole, it seems that little of the metrical literature antedating the art of writing was without music of one sort or

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another. All early references, however, tend to regard the tune and the words as one and the same thing. It seems to some, therefore, since melody is not mentioned by itself, that music was of slight importance. But the truth seems rather to be that the melody was inseparable from the words and not to be thought of apart from them. And the music seems to have been of the highest importance in giving dignity and seriousness to the poem.

What the music of the earliest poems was like we have no exact means of guessing. The writing of musical notes is of comparatively late invention and there was no way to preserve the old tunes through the changing centuries. When the traditional poems were committed to writing the sacred marriage of verse and music usually ended in a divorce. We have, however, a Finnish melody of great age, sung to an epic fragment, which might be taken as typical. It consists of few notes (which can safely be said of nearly all primitive tunes), but the stanza is long and the winding melodic line is highly expressive. But in general we cannot hope to know the earliest melodies of the European nations. We can fumble our way back about a thousand years and then we are met by the blackness of mystery.

But we know that the songs were there and that they gave to little lives the opportunity of being big. We find it hard to realize how important they were, now that telegraph wires have connected all parts of the world, when a message can be sent from San Francisco to Moscow and back in a day, when all that has happened the world over (and much besides) is spread out before us on paper at our breakfast tables the next morning, when all knowledge is classified and published and can be found in any good public library. Imagine yourself living in a village or working on a farm without these things. It is a day's walk to the

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next village. The next country lies beyond the mountains and there are no passes over, and besides there would be no way of living if you left your work, unless you went as a pilgrim. Every year a few young men wander away seeking their fortunes and never come back. Every year a few men come seeking their fortunes and stay. One or two men have wandered the world and come back home, telling wonderful incoherent tales of what happens beyond the mountains. But this is all the news you get beyond the gossip of your town and the country around—except that once in a while comes a wandering minstrel or juggler with tricks and songs. He will tell you the political fortunes of the next kingdom and whether its king is likely to go to war with your king and whether you will thus be forced to serve in the army. He will tell you the gossip and scandal of the courts. He will tell you the customs of other people and will give you practical hints that may save you trouble in your work. And, best of all, he will tell you new stories to vary the monotony of the village gossip. So you will spend a wonderful afternoon listening to him in the village square, and when he is gone you will have something to think and talk about for weeks to come.

Thus the wandering singers served as newspapers. And their best songs were remembered and repeated (and improved upon) to serve as history from that time on. But history might also be made in another way. The skalds of the northern races accompanied their chiefs on their battles in order to sing of them afterwards. But they were there as historians, not merely as poets. 'Ye shall be here that ye may see with your own eyes what is achieved this day,' King Olaf is recorded to have told his skalds on the eve of the battle of Stiklastad (1030), 'and have no occasion, when ye shall afterward celebrate these actions in song, to depend on the reports of others.' The skalds were there,

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that is, as true witnesses of the events, as the specialized repositories of historical information. We cannot suppose that their reports were altogether truthful. They were doubtless expected to 'forget' many things that might seem inglorious. But their songs often passed to the people. And, if the king or chief had made a bad record with them, be sure the songs became changed in people's mouths to show him in his true character. And very often the people, or their own singers, made the narrative songs themselves, dealing out praise or blame by their own justice without fear or favor.

In religion song was a matter of the highest importance, as it has always been. A prophet might reveal the will of the gods, but, unless he were a poet or had a poet to help him, he could not make people remember it. And so in all primitive races the priests were poets and musicians. By the beauty and impressiveness of their songs they proved their right to interpret the divine will. And only in poems could they preserve their doctrine for their successors. But in time the priests generally had to give up their prestige to those who were first of all poets and singers. The gods of Greece were interpreted and made known to the people by the poets. The Teutonic and Norse gods were made known in the epics and sagas. No one else spoke to the people with the same religious conviction as the poet. And so the poets have always, until the most recent times, partaken of a certain religious sanctity. Dante and Milton served as interpreters of religion to their fellow creatures—as beings set apart 'to justify the ways of God to men.'

### III

Thus song, then, was the chief agent of civilization to primitive man. All that is supplied in our lives by railroads, telegraph lines, telephones, newspapers,

## CULTURE VALUE OF PRIMITIVE SONG

books, and libraries was supplied to primitive peoples by song. But this still represents only half the value of song. If it gave to primitive men all the practical service which specialized inventions are rendering to us, it also gave them the romance and beauty which we have largely lost from our lives. Every simple, primitive person, we have said, sings—either his own song or his neighbor's. We have in great abundance the records of what their songs were about. The subjects cover nearly the whole range capable of artistic treatment, but chiefly the great human experiences—love, pity, nature, death, the supernatural.

Slowly, after much imitating and experimenting, men learned to sing their feelings. This achievement was so important that there is hardly another one to be compared with it. For the growth of civilization has been simply the growth in men of consciousness—consciousness of themselves and their surroundings. And every new song that men were able to make for themselves marked a new step in consciousness. To us it seems quite obvious that a deer, for instance, has four legs. But the fact is obvious only as everything else is obvious when it is really looked at. The great difficulty is to get people to *look* at things. And it was probably a real (and most important) discovery when the primitive huntsman realized that the deer he had been hunting had four legs, and not three or five. He simply hadn't thought about the matter before. He hadn't observed clearly. Now he had added one more fact about life to his mental treasure house. He had become one more degree clearly conscious.

Now, art has been the chief agent of this advancing consciousness through the centuries. Our huntsman perhaps never thought about the number of the deer's legs until he tried to draw the deer with a bone knife on the wall of his cave. But when he had to *create* the deer in a work of art then he *had* to come to clear

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consciousness about the matter. And the same is true of every song that simple people have made. It necessitated true observation. It forced its author to *see*. It may seem childishly obvious to say in a song that the bluebells are blue, but most people pay little attention to the question. It is something to have thought the fact worth mentioning.

But it was much more. It was not only an increase in consciousness. It was an increase in experience. By singing over his little song about the bluebell the peasant enjoyed the bluebell a second time in his imagination. It is nothing against the song that the blueness of the bluebell is obvious. Most of the beautiful things in life are obvious but nevertheless go unrecognized. The important thing about the song is that somebody enjoyed the blueness of the bluebell so much that he had to sing about it.

The great use of these personal songs to people was that it helped them to feel at home in the world. 'The first poet of human things,' says the Countess Martingo-Cæsaresco, 'was perhaps one who stood in the presence of death. In the twilight that went before civilization the loves of men were prosaic and intellectual unrest was remote, but there was already Rachel weeping for her children and would not be comforted because they are not.' Death as a mystery was a horror too great to be borne. But death made into a song could be looked at and in some degree known. The awful sense of helplessness as people stood beside a fresh grave was alleviated by their singing of their grief. When the mystery had become incarnated in a work of art they could face it and know who their enemy was.

Every man who feels emotions craves expression of them. The ability to express is perhaps what separates man from the animals. The man who cannot achieve the expression of what he feels sinks back into a spir-

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itual numbness in which joy and sorrow are of less importance. But the man who is able to see the things that are within him and about him—to see them clearly enough to express them in songs—is able to take his place in life and go on to more consciousness and more power.

Something like this is the service songs have performed to men's souls. But, most of all, of course, songs have taught men how to love. As men began to realize that love must be more than a mere blind craving they had to answer the question: 'How much do I love her? How do I love her?' And the question had to be answered in some kind of concrete terms. One old French lover says in his song that if King Henry gave to him the town of Paris on condition that he give up the love of his sweetheart, he would reply to Henry the King: 'Take back your town of Paris; I love my sweetheart more, heigh-ho, I love my sweetheart more.' And when we read the fine straightforward old French in which the song is sung we know that he meant it. It is evident that the whole estate of love and marriage has risen to a vastly higher level when the lover, instead of saying, 'I want my sweetheart,' can sing, 'I want my sweetheart more than I want the town of Paris.' So songs gave to life definite meanings and values.

### IV

In the beginning, as we have said, it is probable that everybody made songs for himself. Helen Vacaresco noted a long song improvised by a Roumanian peasant woman who was going mad; the woman was suffering under a great sorrow and was trying to express it. Being simple and without knowledge or fear of artistic forms and laws, she was able to express it. And each day she wandered in the fields singing the song she had composed, changing it little by little. It was not



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made for the sake of making a song, but for the sake of expressing her sorrow. It was, of course, only half a song and a half a mechanical repetition of her troubles. But it had its beauty of word and something like a set melody; it was an emotion objectified, put into a work of art where it could be looked at and known.

Here was song at its very earliest beginning. It was spontaneous, it was personal, it was utterly sincere. And, because it sought some objective form, it was a primitive work of art. We may imagine the earliest songs starting in just this way. Perhaps this Roumanian peasant woman had her counterpart thousands of years ago. Her song, or part of it, was heard and imitated by others who felt the same sorrow. It was changed in passing from mouth to mouth. Needless words were dropped, weak expressions were strengthened. As men became able to look more clearly at their trouble the essential things in the song were emphasized or put in a more emphatic position. Everything was dropped from it that did not express the very heart of the emotion. The lines perhaps became more rhythmical; the verses began to balance and contrast with each other; the metaphors became more brilliant or more precise. Soon all members of the tribe knew it, and when the young men wandered away to other lands they took the song with them.

At the same time a similar perfecting process was going on in the music. The original melody was perhaps little more than a chant of two or three notes, the tune rising when the emotional pitch was raised and dropping when the movement became more calm. The tune was at first not thought of as a thing in itself. But gradually people became conscious of the two or three notes in their relation and succession. And they began to make them more varied, to express the changes of emotion more accurately. The melody became divided into stanzas and lines corresponding with

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the words and showed in itself where the thought came to a partial stop and where it began again. Then people began to notice peculiar figures which they had unconsciously put into the melody. They made use of these, balancing or contrasting them to add beauty to the tune. And gradually the melody came to have beauty and meaning of its own.

This series of changes perhaps occupied centuries, for the artistic power of primitive men advances very slowly. The singers had not yet thought of putting this song in rhythm; and it was yet many centuries before they would feel anything like a musical scale. Rhythm had probably developed among people as a thing in itself, not directly connected with musical tones. Rhythmic movement is common to all men—in walking, in running, and in the beating of the heart. Dancing must have arisen spontaneously from an excess of emotion. Such dancing was perhaps accompanied by the clapping of hands, the beating of sticks, or the pounding of some primitive drum. Then with the invention of some primitive musical instrument the tribal musician began to play a simple dance tune in rhythm, a tune of two notes, at first an aimless shifting from one note to another, and later an organized melody with tonal figures and balances and contrasts.

It is probable that these two elements—rhythm and melody—were developed separately and were at first regarded as separate arts. At least it seems certain that singing was at first without rhythm. It must have been a wonderful day when somebody thought of combining the two—of singing the old song with metre and accents. But this, too, must have developed very slowly, being at first no more than an accenting of each alternative note. At the same time the song had probably been divided into line divisions. The singer then probably developed his rhythm from both ends, so to speak, building a more complex series of accents from

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the single group of two notes, and at the same time subdividing the line into sections. After several more centuries, perhaps, the tribe possessed a song that was fairly metrical and regular.

All this time the notion of a scale—a set succession of notes from which the notes of the tune were to be chosen—was entirely lacking. It came comparatively late in musical development, though it is the first incident in musical *history*. At first each melody was its own scale. Then, as people began to observe similarities in the tone relations between several melodies, they began to have a conception of the regular succession of tones which was common to all of them. Such a succession, a mode or primitive scale, was of but three or four notes. By arranging the semi-tones several new scales could be formed. And by here and there adding a note above or below the scales could be enlarged.

With the enlargement of the scales melodies became enlarged in range. More opportunities arose for the balancing and contrasting of melodic devices. The tune became more complex, more regular, and more beautiful.

It was now several centuries since the song had first come into existence. Since that time it had undergone perhaps a dozen transformations, each so unlike the other that nobody would have suspected they had any relation. But they were different forms of one and the same song. For songs have ancestors and descendants just as men do. Our song may have had a numerous progeny. As it passed from one province to another certain phrases of the melody lingered in people's minds and found their way into other songs. Perhaps a line or two of its words became common property and were used as the refrain for a new song. Certainly as people made other songs they perforce made them somewhat in the image of the great ancestor.

## THE LYRIC IMPULSE

Thus for centuries—ten, twenty, or thirty, likely as not—the song was growing and changing, or at least giving birth to children before dying by the wayside. And folk-songs are still alive, growing and changing. It seems possible that the years of their natural life may be numbered, for it is becoming harder every year for them to live in their new environment. But they are still in the land of the living and may continue for centuries to come, and if so they are bound to continue to grow and change. Thirty centuries of growth have not taken place that songs may stop growing right here. Perhaps the songs of to-day may seem as crude to people five hundred years hence as the songs of five hundred years ago seem to us now.

### V

We must always remember that songs of every kind are primarily composed in the spirit of this typical folk-song. Even the most learned composer is spiritually a descendant of the crazy Roumanian peasant woman, and his songs, if they are real songs at all, are of the same spontaneous kind as hers. However much he may be occupied with conscious scholastic principles, if his music does not somehow sing in this natural, artless vein it is but as sounding brass and tinkling cymbal. The impulse to song is the soul of all true songs the world over.

What this impulse is has occupied the minds of theorists for many a year. Their explanations are perhaps not important, since whatever their conclusions we still possess the wonderful song literature which is at our disposal. But their theories are at least interesting, if only to prove that song, like love, is one of those human things that can never be utterly explained.

Primitive people almost invariably attribute music

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to divine agency. We know the story of Orpheus, who moved the beasts and even the rocks and trees to tears by his sweet singing. We know also the story of the competition of Apollo the harp player and Marsyas the flute player. The Chinese say that they obtained their musical scale from a miraculous bird. The legend is interesting as showing how people tend to invent a supernatural explanation for the artificial laws which are felt to need some sort of superstitious bolstering up. For it is recorded in Chinese history that this scale has several times been changed by edict of the emperor, who considers an orthodox scale a very important thing to insist upon and wishes to have his word accepted as divine law. The Japanese tradition is that the sun-goddess once retired into a cave and the gods devised music to lure her forth once more. The story suggests the practice of certain primitive tribes who sing and dance during a solar eclipse, either to scare away the evil spirits or to beg the sun-god back into their midst. The Nahua Indians of North America say that the god Tezcatlipoca sent for music from the sun and made a bridge of whales and turtles by which to convey it to the earth. The Abyssinians have a tale to the effect that Yared transmitted music to men, the holy spirit having appeared to him in the form of a pigeon. But in the story of the Javans there seems to be a kernel of scientific truth. They say that the earliest music was suggested to them by the wind whistling through a bamboo tube which had been left hanging on a tree.

The theories of the earlier musical philosophers of the nineteenth century were not so unlike these legends as they seemed at the time. These men had a limited historical outlook and were inclined to discredit, when they did not ignore, the music preceding that of Palestrina, just as the historians of painting before Ruskin's time tended to regard all Italian painting before

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Raphael as mere experimental bungling. To these earlier philosophers music was a thing *discovered* rather than a thing *evolved*. In their view music had always existed in a sort of secret treasure house instituted by a beneficent creator for the edification of men. All melodies and harmonies were piled in there awaiting the explorations of musicians. The explorations were undertaken by the 'inspired' artists, those who had been endowed with finer ears and more daring imaginations. All musical history was a story of the development of music from its imperfect state among the primitives to its perfect state with Beethoven. This description may be exaggerated, but it is certain that the earlier theorists considered music as a self-existent thing, with its own laws and its own principles of beauty—laws and principles which must be discovered by the elect among artists instead of being evolved by the peoples. As to the impulse to song and to artistic creation in general they laid it to that mysterious thing, 'inspiration.'

Schopenhauer's theory has a modern ring and is excellent poetry even though it can hardly rank as science. He says that while the other arts—painting, sculpture, and architecture—represent the Idea, which is the reflection of the Will, music represents the Will itself. It is pure energy, the nearest thing that exists among men to the essence of reality.

With Darwin all this kind of speculation changed and the theories of musical origins became more a matter of biology than of music. Darwin traced the impulse to song to the love-making of animals and primitive man. He showed how in Nature beauty is continually being made the adjunct and servant of love—how the bird sings or the insect dances to attract its mate. Many theorists have sought to explain the whole of art as originating in the sexual impulse. But in this theory, as in all, there are data on both sides of the

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question and the explanation is interesting rather than valuable.

Herbert Spencer pursues the same biological line. But he traces the impulse to song from the surplus of energy in living things. Nature, as we know, is prodigal, producing thousands of eggs or seeds where she expects only scores of insects or plants to grow. And so she gives to each living thing more energy than is needed to keep it alive and healthy—or at least more energy than is needed *all the time*. With this surplus of energy something must be done. And that something among men is art. When a wild rose-bush is put in rich soil it grows a double rose and a larger one. And so, when a man has a little more than enough for his material needs, he attempts to decorate and beautify his surroundings. To Spencer the typical example of nascent art is the child who dances out of pure joy of life. But others object to this, saying that this dancing of the child (and all similarly spontaneous art) is lacking in the very quality which makes art—namely, discipline and control. It is selection and control, they say, which makes any work of art more than a mere daub of color or conglomeration of sounds.

Certainly the biological theories have not satisfactorily explained the second great element in artistic creation—the impulse to refinement. We have seen that once our typical folk-song was invented by the Roumanian peasant woman it could not stay as it was, but had to take new forms, changing continually, and, as we see it, usually for the better. What is it that makes men dissatisfied with a crude, formless melody and desirous of making it regular and organic? Perhaps it is no more than the impulse to play which children show when they arrange pebbles in new and strange shapes on the sand or savages when they daub their faces with new colors of war-paint. Again the surplus of energy? Perhaps. Perhaps when people

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have become familiar with their primitive melody they notice a peculiar turn of the phrase and take pleasure in seeing what they can *do* with it in the way of repeating it and inventing contrasting phrases. At any rate, there it is, this impulse to refinement, more mystery for the theorist and more entertainment for the music lover.

On the whole, these theories probably err in trying to simplify the case too much. More likely music has not one simple *cause*, but many interacting *causes*. Like every individual man whose ancestors are a multitude, song must be the result of many, many causes.

### VI

We have been speaking chiefly of the folk-song, the fountain of all vocal music. But the art-song, that is, the song for a solo voice with instrumental accompaniment, which is quantitatively but a small part of vocal music, is the special study of this book. For convenience we date the beginning of this art-song from Schubert, regarding the song writers who preceded him as mere experimenters. Accordingly, at the time of the writing of this book the art-song, one of the four or five great divisions of modern music, is hardly a century old.

It is, of course, a somewhat arbitrary division that separates the art-song from song as a whole. The arbitrary division is justified by its convenience. Schubert may fairly be said to have infused a new spirit into song writing and most of the songs written by established composers since his time have been written in his spirit. So we find an extensive and remarkably homogeneous song literature, the product of the last hundred years, which in its form and intent separates itself from the folk-song. The songs on the boundary line are few. The songs before Schubert



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which give any evidence of this recent spirit are hardly to be found at all. It is as though a new god had descended from the skies and taught a new kind of art to his creatures.

What is this distinction we draw between the folk-song and the art-song? The superficial elements of contrast are apt to be misleading, for, while most folk-songs are simple, many art-songs are simple, too; and, while many art-songs are irregular and peculiar, their irregularities are rarely so great as are to be found in the earlier folk-songs. The distinction must be sought in the spirit of the songs. It becomes more eloquent the more we study the two sorts. It forces us continually to seek further back for the true character of each, so that at last it seems as though we needed two different souls for the singing of them. The folk-song speaks for man in the mass; the art-song speaks for man the individual. For the folk-song, let us always remember, was composed not by an individual, but by a mass, each member of which may have contributed one or more of its beauties. If it had sung of a joy or sorrow which belonged exclusively to its original singer, it would have held no interest for other people and would have died with its composer. Those folk-songs were, of course, most popular which spoke for the interests and emotions of the greatest number of men. We can justly say that those folk-songs are greatest which sing of the things that are common to all men in such a way that they can be understood by all men. But in the composition of the art-song precisely the opposite influences are dominant. The composer, if he is to make his mark in the art world, must not write exactly like other composers, but must distinguish his work in some way. He must call attention to himself or his work by writing in a style that is not quite like anybody else's. Fashionable or critical audiences will pay little attention to the man who seems merely

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to be repeating what a greater man has written before him; these audiences continually crave a novelty or a sensation. Everything forces the conscious composer in these days to be as personal as possible. His song then expresses the feelings of one individual in one particular style.

It has always been a nice question of taste whether one prefers to observe the type or the individual. Would you have your love song one that could be sung by every lover, high or low, or one that would ring true for you alone? If you are quite honest you will probably have to admit that you will swing from one to the other from time to time. At times it will seem vulgar that you should be rejoicing in precisely the same sentiments as those which are sending the Italian bootblack into a seventh heaven; your delicacy, your sense of dignity will demand that your love be your own, like no one else's on earth. And, again, the precious selfishness of cultivating your own soul with such conscious care when it is such a tiny part of humanity—such a reaction will make you praise heaven that you and the bootblack can sing the same love song and feel the same love.

However you feel about it the art-song has chosen to specialize on individuals. Not only on individual persons, but on particular feelings of those persons. The folk-song expresses the type emotion—love, sorrow, or patriotism; the art-song expresses some particular shade or nuance of these emotions. The Scotch folk-tune which we sing with Burns's stirring words, 'Scots Wha Hae,' expresses magnificently the defiance of patriotic bravery. It might be the song of anybody facing odds in defense of his beliefs. Schubert's song, 'Courage,' has exactly the same note of defiance, but, so to speak, only a particular section of the great general emotion. His defiance is that of a man broken down with sorrow and misfortune, who in one superb mo-

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ment vows to conquer by pure force of will power—a vow which we know is impossible of fulfillment. The modern French composers are especially apt at catching a particular delicate phase of a mood or emotion and rendering it so that it would never be mistaken for another phase, however much the two resembled each other. Have you never caught yourself moodily looking at the last glow from a sunset and wondered whether you have ever had a moment just like that before—a moment which the slightest change in the things about you would have spoiled utterly? Such a moment it is the delight of the art-song to portray; it is almost unknown to the folk-song.

The folk-song, again, presents an emotion in its sum total; the art-song presents it in its component parts. With their capacity and zest for exactitude song composers have continually, since Schubert's time, given more and more attention to accuracy of detail. In one of the earliest of Schubert's songs, 'Gretchen at the Spinning-wheel,' the girl is musing of her lover while she is spinning. The whirr of the spinning-wheel is in the accompaniment and enframes the whole song. But when the girl sighs, 'And, ah, his kiss!' Schubert felt that she would surely not continue her mechanical spinning. So he makes the whirring stop in the accompaniment and in its place comes a lovely succession of chords—one would say like a blush. Now a folk-song would have paid no attention to such a detail. It would have caught and probably caught with wonderful accuracy the spirit of the whole song. But the variation of mood in the words would not have affected the music. It could not, because the folk-song, unpublished and disseminated among many untrained persons, must be easy to remember. It is accordingly most often cast in a regular stanza form and the same melody is repeated for each verse of the words, though the heroine change therein from the noon of joy to the

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midnight of sorrow. The great majority of art-songs, therefore, are not written in stanza form, but follow the words with specially adapted music from beginning to end. (This is the so-called *durchkomponiertes Lied*.) The form of the art-song tends to be free in the extreme, while that of the folk-song is usually strict and regular. In the art-song the tendency toward exactitude of delineation sometimes goes to extremes. The music tries to be just to each phrase, or even to each word, and the song as a whole is lost in the details. But in general the good art-song shows not only the emotion as a whole, by means of its formal or modal unity, but also the component parts of the emotion placed side by side. We might say that the art-song follows the impressionistic method of showing the component colors on the canvas and letting the eye blend them into the resultant, while the folk-song follows the older method of mixing the components on the palette and showing only the blended result to the eye.

The highest glory of the folk-song is to express what unites men. The highest glory of the art-song is to express what differentiates men. The folk-song includes; the art-song selects. The folk-song is general; the art-song precise. The folk-song tells of life as man found it; the art-song tells of life as man made it.

Nearly everything that is distinctive of the art-song involves conscious planning. However spontaneous and unrestrained a *Lieder* singer may appear on the concert platform, there is behind his or her interpretation a whole conscious network of selection and rejection. A good folk-song, as everyone has noticed, asks for no intellectual comprehension—it 'sings itself.' But an art-songs rarely 'sings itself.' It must be *sung*. And this is precisely one of the beauties of the art-song—the feeling that it has been achieved by art, that it is the working-out of somebody's intention, that it has been *personally* propelled.

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### VII

A good Lieder singer is like some weaver of a delicate design in silk. Every crossing is planned and the worker must not let a single thread slip through his fingers. Every detail of a song must be understood before it can be interpreted. This does not mean that the singer must have a 'reason'—a logical argument in words—for everything done. Usually words and arguments about a song only befuddle the artistic sense. The song must be *understood* in musical terms—by comparing each phrase with similar phrases in the song, by trying different tempos, different phrasings, different qualities of voice. To *understand* a song in the musical sense is to know when you sing it that you could have sung it in ten or in fifty other specific ways, but that you chose to sing it exactly in *this* way. It requires a great deal of attention to fix in your ear accurately all the little beauties and peculiarities of the melody, the distinctions contained in tiny variations of tempo, and so on. The facts are all obvious in the song, but they demand attention. So the process is exactly that of the primitive folk-singer who noticed, to his delight, that bluebells were blue and that the deer had four legs. And, like the folk-singer, when you have consciously noted a multitude of these obvious facts you feel more at home in the world—you have completed a step in your education.

If the singer is obliged carefully to select and reject, he is only doing what the composer did before him. For the song writer's task is one that will test the soundness of his musicianship and his art. The song is short. It will probably be sung among a number of other short songs. It has every chance of being forgotten. The composer can waste no time. With little or no preluding he must strike a melodic phrase that in smallest compass is worth hearing and worth remem-

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bering. He has none of the opportunities of the symphonist or the opera writer. He cannot lead up to his chief theme with a long expressive orchestral crescendo. He cannot introduce it at the moment when his audience is keyed up and receptive over a tense emotional story. If the melody of the song is not worth the trouble, no amount of decoration can make it so. If one phrase out of four in the song is good and the rest mediocre, the song is as much a failure as though it had no single bar of beauty. When the composer has written his song, he has committed himself. He stands exposed to the universe without protection, without excuse. He has chosen the test with which genius is tested—to be great within narrow limits. If his music speaks to the heart it speaks in words of one syllable.

If the basic materials of a song are so simple, it is evident that the misplacing of a single note is a very serious error. The expressive phrase might have stood in a dozen slightly different forms. It was a delicate judgment and selection that chose exactly this one. The phrase, if it is to express something of importance, must suggest a great deal more than it can say. This is the problem of the *lyric*—the personal song of the emotions—whether in words or music. If a poet is to express the whole tenderness and fury of love in eight, twelve, or sixteen lines he must select just the right details that will suggest the whole epic of love that he did not write. The structure and the language may be simple in the extreme. 'My luv' is like a red, red rose,' sings Burns in one of the most beautiful love lyrics ever written. The poem is only a succession of the simplest poetic figures, similes; impressive effects of rhyme and metre are not to be found. But every one of the similes is a masterpiece, suggesting in striking manner the variety and extravagance of the lover's feelings. 'My luv' is like a melody that's sweetly play'd

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in tune,' continues the poet. 'As fair art thou, my bonnie lass, so deep in luv' am I—and from this point the imagery sweeps up and up with increasing majesty and frenzy—'And I will luv' thee still, my dear, till a' the seas gang dry. Till a' the seas gang dry, my dear, and the rocks melt wi' the sun; Oh! I will luv' thee still, my dear, while the sands o' life shall run.' We can imagine Milton building up a long and magnificent description, in a whole blank verse canto, of the rocks melting in the heat of the sun. But Burns dazzles our imagination by just mentioning the gorgeous picture and then pressing on to another.

The themes of a good song are like this. They picture the heart of an emotion that might be made the subject of an opera; they establish instantly a mood that might dominate a movement of a symphony. They picture one detail of the building and let it imply the whole vast edifice.

Schuman, in the middle section of his song, *Widmung*, has such a melody, one which leads us straight to the centre of a mood as profound as one can find in many symphonies:



One can imagine Beethoven building a long, superb movement out of this theme; the 'cellos would take it over rich bass harmony, the counterpoint would grow deeper and more complex, a grand crescendo of many measures would lead to a climax with the brass; the whole body of violins would take up the theme in unison; it would be exchanged between the wood-winds and strings; and the movement would fade away on some magical effect with the theme in the high registers of the violins. The theme is abundantly worth such extended and serious treatment. Schumann uses it for two lines and then returns to his original motive. If

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his purpose had been to get the greatest possible effect out of given materials, such a procedure would have been criminal wastefulness. But his purpose was to express the spirit of the words. So he used the theme as the expression demanded, not begrudging a motive which would have served him for a whole symphony movement. And, thanks to this restraint, he made a perfect song.

And the restraint which the composer showed in using themes in naked simplicity must be reflected in the delivery of the song by the singer. Conscious restraint is foreign to the spirit of the folk-song, excepting for the universal rule that every work of art must show some reserve power. But in the art-song, artifice as it is with conscious pains, reserve in the singer is a virtue in itself. Unless one feels that every detail of the delivery is firmly under control one has an uneasy sense that the singer may fly off the handle at any moment. And this feeling robs us of any sense we might have that the singer has a message to give.

Most concert-goers know only too well how little this principle is regarded among Lieder singers. Is there one singer out of ten who does not try to transcend his or her song? Is there one singer out of ten who would not rather have his or her hearers at the end of a piece exclaim: 'A great singer!' rather than 'A great song!' And to force their personalities to the foreground singers will abuse their songs from beginning to end. Often they do it intentionally, sincerely believing that this is the only kind of singing that is effective. But in a great number of cases, without doubt, it is done unconsciously, as the natural and only way of singing. A special coloring on one of the singer's pet tones, a long pause on a high note, an exaggerated retard in a sentimental passage—these sins against taste are being constantly committed by singers whose only interest in songs is to advance their per-



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sonal reputations. In a way they are not to be blamed, for competition is keen; a hundred fail where one succeeds, and that one succeeds usually only by forcing his personality on the public; and the public is inclined to be *blasé*, to demand picturesque personalities, and to grumble if a singer is 'ordinary.' Singers need intelligent audiences as much as audiences need intelligent singers.

But, whatever may be the lamentable state of actual conditions, a song, if well sung, is sung with intelligent restraint. The ideal singer will give a song as he believes it should be given, without concession to the prejudices of the audiences, content to let the work of art speak for itself and to allow people to forget the workman in their joy at the work.

And as soon as the demand for restraint is met, the singer discovers a new and kindred demand in the song, one which is quite as inherent in the art-type. This is the demand for style. Style, as an artist uses it, is a ticklish thing, one which cannot quite be put into words. But every working artist feels it as a value. For, if the singer is to pick and choose (as the composer picked and chose previously) in the singing of a song, he must do so according to some principle. This principle, if it be genuine and not arbitrary, will be the style of the song. It will make the hearer feel that the interpretative details were not only chosen carefully, but were chosen well. It is that subtle thing that seems to make the song 'hang together.'

Style, in short, is one more of the typical characteristics of the good art-song. The style of a song is unique. No two songs, thoroughly well sung, have exactly the same style. The style is developed out of the music itself; it is implied in the notes as they rest on the printed page; it has awaited the discerning eye of the interpretive artist. And so when a song has been thoroughly understood and 'lived in' by the singer,

**Great Singers of the Past:**

**Luigi Lablache  
Maria Malibran**

**Giovanni Battista Rubini  
Angelica Catalani**







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it will always have a personality or style of its own which will hover above the song and embrace every note. An art-song which on hearing does not reveal a unique style is either a bad song or a good song badly sung.

This type of art, the most delicate, the most personal, the most self-contained, is laid in bewildering abundance at our feet. And some fairly general acquaintance with modern song literature is a necessity for the singer or the concert-goer. A singer can no more understand the songs she sings without at the same time being familiar with others than a student can understand the history of his own country without knowing that of foreign lands. For such a singer to appear in public as an interpreter is simply an insolence. If he 'specializes' in modern French songs, the more necessity for him to know old German. You can never appreciate any quality without knowing something of its opposite. And the same rule applies to audiences. The first song one hears in life probably goes unnoticed. The second gives the attention something on which to base a comparison. And every new acquisition thereafter increases the opportunity for comparison—increases the hearer's pleasure. How much more you have learned about Debussy when you have heard a cycle of Moussorgsky!

And if a comparison is necessary between art-songs of one and another lineage, how much more necessary it is of art-songs and folk-songs. It is important for singer and audience to know various types of art-songs. It is much more important to know art-songs and folk-songs. When he does, all that is peculiar to the art-song becomes set off in relief, and all that is common property becomes enhanced in value. A knowledge of folk-songs is a knowledge of humanity in its simplest terms. With it one can 'walk with kings nor lose the common touch.'

## CHAPTER V

### FOLK-SONGS

The nature and value of folk-songs—Folk-songs of the British Isles—Folk-song in the Latin lands—German and Scandinavian folk-song—Hungarian folk-song—Folk-songs of the Slavic countries; folk-song in America.

#### I

THE brothers Grimm, profound students of popular lore, used to say that they had never found a single lie in folk-poetry. This sounds strange as we think of the giants and fairies who appear in it, along with historical events given a completely new twist for the sake of artistic attractiveness. Obviously the meaning of the brothers Grimm was somewhat profound. And so, too, is the truth in folk-poetry.

For the imagination of folk-poetry is not the promulgation of lies, but the interpretation of facts. The folk-poets meant something as they sang their songs, though they may not have been entirely conscious about it. Why, for instance, is there never a good stepmother in folk-song? There have been good stepmothers, undoubtedly, but the folk-poets knew that it is not in the nature of things that stepmothers will be as good to children as natural mothers. Or why does Jack the Giant Killer not make a pact with the giant when he holds the tyrant finally at his mercy, and live in luxury on a part of the spoils ever afterward? It would be a realistic ending. It would be true to modern politics and correct according to the latest canons of art. But Jack is a popular hero, and a popular hero does not betray the people he fights for. If you want to know some fact in the history of a people don't go to the official

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records; they may be tainted by the vanity of the king or by the personal bias of the recorder. But go to the people's folk-lore. If the fact is there, it is a truth as solid as the mountains. The song may tell you that their good king had thirty-seven horses shot under him in one day, that he fought and killed, single-handed, ten men at arms who surrounded him. It may tell you this, and you will perhaps suspect that the arithmetic is faulty, but you will know that the essential statement—that of the heroism and the popularity of the king—is true. The king's minstrel might have made a song making a coward and tyrant a hero and a popular leader; but he could not have made people sing it. 'The ballad-maker only wields his power for as long as he is the true interpreter of the popular will. Laws may be imposed on the unwilling, but not songs.' \* Written histories may tell you that under such and such a king the people were happy—that the revolution which came afterward was a factitious or fomented one. Go to your folk-song. Bujor the Red-Headed, a Moldavian brigand and a popular hero, was 'pitiless toward officers of government and toward nobles; he was, on the contrary, most gracious toward peasants and the unfortunate.' This is historical evidence more reliable than sealed parchment. The government of that land was *not* good, the nobles were *not* beneficent. No written history of a people can be considered reliable as long as it conflicts with that people's folk-lore.

Truthfulness to facts—this is what the brothers Grimm claimed for folk-lore. Goethe ascribes to it truthfulness to art. 'The unsophisticated man,' he writes, 'is more the master of direct, effective expression in few words than he who has received a regular literary education.' The observation has been made hundreds of times by competent judges. The simple mind has a wonderful power of seeing the essential

\* Countess Martinengo-Cesarese.



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in a thing and expressing it briefly and exactly. To have command over expression in the simplest terms—is this not the beginning of art?

This power which is revealed by folk-poetry is also revealed by folk-music. The people's melodies have the same 'direct, effective expression' in a few notes that Goethe noticed in their poetry. As truly as the greatest composers, folk-songs can say universal things in a few notes. Beethoven may have equalled, but he never surpassed, the 'direct, effective expression' of 'Auld Lang Syne.' The majesty of this song can hardly be equalled in the whole of musical literature. Many people have noticed the peculiar effect of the refrain which makes it seem as though a mighty and harmonious orchestra of trumpets and trombones were joining in the chorus. And this with a melody denuded of every merely decorative tone, written in a scale of just five notes!

Everywhere in folk-music we find this power of expressing the highest things in the fewest notes. Only the very greatest of conscious composers have been able to compete with the folk-song on its own terms, within its rigid limitations. Art-songs have elaborated and refined. But it seems as though the *essence* is always in the folk-tunes. Like the popular stories that furnished plots to the old dramatists, these melodies have supplied the simple musical resources which conscious composers have developed. Every sort of emotion is expressed in the folk-songs, every degree of passion, every quality of mood—provided only it is human, common to all men.

Do not think that folk-songs are an affair of the past, a subject for the archeologist. One is inclined to think that it is so among Anglo-Saxon people, especially in America. But folk-songs are not only sung this moment in many a land, but are yet living and growing in more than one country. The quantity of very recent

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Italian folk-songs is enormous. Every year, at the fair of Piedegrotta, near Naples, the popular singers of the city stand on a cart and sing the songs they have composed in the past months. For hours these concerts continue, the crowd moving from one singer to another. The songs are caught up and sung by the listeners. At the end of the festival no vote is taken, but everyone knows which song has been the winner in the competition. It is being sung from one end of the city to the other. And the successful songs of the year's festival pass into folk-music of the people.

It is true of these songs (as was not true of earlier folk-music) that the composers are known and remembered. Indeed, the songs are promptly printed and circulated. But the composers are nevertheless true sons of the people. They have little knowledge of letters and musical laws; they compose from the heart and from the instinct for fitness. The music of such composers can justly be classed as folk-music, since it is utterly in the popular spirit and receives the *visé* of the masses. It is more unfortunate that in Naples a phonograph firm has undertaken to make commercial capital out of the Fair of Piedegrotta, and every year takes records of the successful songs, which it circulates all over Europe. Under such conditions the composers must necessarily soon lose the celebrated 'folk simplicity,' if they have not lost it already.

It is fair to say that in Italy folk-music is still very much alive. All that is new in life is celebrated by these folk-poets. The famous 'Funicula,' a modern Italian folk-song *par excellence*, was made to celebrate the funicular or inclined railroad in the days when this was a novelty. There is a well-known Neapolitan song in honor of the telephone, and current events, such as the Turkish war, receive generous attention.

In many other countries the *growth* of folk-song has all but ceased, though the songs of former times are sung

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with almost as much zest as ever. But these songs (including most of those familiar to us) are usually not of great age. At least they have generally been remade in more up-to-date form and do not plainly show evidences of their age. Generally speaking, we may be sure that any folk-song in the common major scale is to be dated within the last two hundred years. It may have been founded on an older song, but its modern changes have been such as to give it a totally new flavor. This is not to say that all old songs which remain living in the hearts of the people become changed according to musical fashions. Those which have a strong enough traditional hold may keep their ancient form after Debussy has been forgotten. Thus many an English folk-song, startling and inspiriting in its originality, is in a modal scale—with a minor that is not commonly in use to-day, or else a shifting between one tonic and another which carries us clearly back into the days when tonality was not yet felt in scales. Yet these songs were not committed to paper in Henry VIII's or Queen Elizabeth's time, when they attained their present form. They have mostly been discovered by earnest searching only within the last ten years. They lived, in unsophisticated, out-of-the-way places, in their ancient form.

In general, of course, the question of the age or authenticity of a folk-song is one for the musical archeologist, rather than for the mere lover of music. The folk-songs that are in the hands of the general public are in all stages of authenticity and purity. There was a time when no publisher who knew his business would think of publishing a folk-song in its true form. It was barbarous, not fit for the graces of the drawing-room. So some composer of the fashion (or, failing such, some hack) was hired to 'arrange' them and to supply an accompaniment in approved style. And, naturally, under such a régime it was not the most

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characteristic of a country's folk-songs that were chosen, but those most similar to polite music—that is, the least characteristic. Often the songs had been transcribed by little-trained listeners or else not transcribed at all, but only imperfectly remembered. There was little of the national essence left in such music. And the composers of the day discovered the fact and turned it to their account. Why go to Sicily to pick up folk-songs when Sicilian folk-songs can be written without stirring out of your study in London? And this is precisely what Sir Henry Bishop, for instance, did. And it is to such a hoax that we owe the tune of 'Home, Sweet Home,' which was at first published in a book of alleged Sicilian songs 'edited' by Bishop, few, if any, of which were genuine.

These days, however, are past. The modern attitude toward folk-songs is one of respect, almost of reverence. The greatest of pains have been taken to preserve the songs as they were actually sung, 'mistakes' and all. No tune of two notes is too slight to be worth the trouble of accurate transcription. Especially since the invention of the phonograph the scientific study of folk-songs has prospered. Thousands upon thousands of songs have been taken down by the phonograph among the Indians of North America, the negroes of Africa, and the Russians of the Caucasus. The results, it is true, are likely to be regarded as scientific—ethnological or psychological—data rather than as artistic entities. But the tunes are accessible to musicians and often appear in the art music of the time—as we well know from Russian symphonies or even from Charles Wakefield Cadman's interesting arrangements of Indian lyrics. And the value of the accurate transcriptions as data for scientific æsthetic theory cannot be overestimated.

However, most of the folk-songs available to the music lover have not the stigma of 'science' attached to

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them. Nearly all that have been published in the last ten years show some care of editing, some concern that the tunes, if they be not exactly as they were in their habitat, shall be true to the spirit of the original. Some editions give the original unaccompanied form of the tunes, perhaps with interesting variants. Few, in fact, try to pull the wool over the reader's eyes. Scientific or not, modern editions of folk-songs show a candor which the subject has long needed.

Many folk-songs, like the modern German, approximate 'art' music in their musical basis and can be understood as they stand. That is, they have the prevailing scales and are sung with accompaniments in the accented harmony. But most folk-songs are not sung with accompaniment. And when the editors begin to supply accompaniments trouble ensues. For the songs have their own style and will not coalesce with a type of accompaniment made for another style. And editors, trained in the schools, cannot produce a new musical style at a moment's notice. So the original melodies may be changed and adapted more nearly to a diatonic scale which will fit a ready-made accompaniment. Or the accompaniment may do its best to suit the modal or unusual style of the melodies. Or both sides may be forced to make concessions. It would be most satisfactory, if our ears could get used to it, to sing these more unusual folk-songs without accompaniment and not try the barbarous experiment of making the right foot fit the left shoe. But even when they are altered, these melodies retain much of their beauty, and one would much rather have them 'edited' than not have them at all.

We must also mention that great class of songs which are not strictly folk-songs at all, but deserve to rank as folk-songs by every title except the technical one. They are those songs written by conscious composers, published and sold, but intended for wide cir-

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ulation and great popularity—those, in short, which by their simplicity and genuineness evoke a human response similar to that evoked by true folk-songs. Such are the immortal songs of Stephen Foster in America—‘My Old Kentucky Home,’ ‘Old Black Joe,’ and the rest. Such is ‘Annie Laurie,’ one of the most beautiful of melodies. And such are the German songs of Silcher—*Die Lorelei*, *Scheiden*, and many others. Nearly all these composers have been without aptitude in the larger musical forms—often persons of little education and culture. Very few great composers have succeeded in thus writing folk-songs. Weber, of all of them, is the nearest to the folk-spirit, and the slow movement of Agathe’s aria, *Leise, leise*, from *Der Freischütz*, is now a permanent folk-song with the best of them. Schubert’s *Lindenbaum* and *Heidenröslein* have the same quality. Mendelssohn is a folk-composer by virtue of his song *Es ist bestimmt* in *Gottes Rath*. But in general it has seemed next to impossible for a conscious and highly trained composer to catch the spirit of the folk in simplest terms.

The most available folk-music for the average student is that which is freely arranged and edited by a man whose name is a guarantee of honest and musicianly work—such a man as Weckerlin, collector and editor of French songs from the earliest to the most recent; or Cecil Sharp, collector of forgotten songs in Somersetshire, England. Such an editor may keep the songs intact or may vary them, may adopt some one else’s accompaniment or write one of his own, but he will always do it intelligently, altering only what it is reasonably necessary to alter, and keeping always true to the spirit, if not to the letter, of the original.

It should be borne in mind that the songs to be described in the following pages are, many of them, sung quite spontaneously and naturally to-day by the peasants and unsophisticated people of the various coun-

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tries. The writer, while crossing the ocean, once listened for hours to the Dutch steerage passengers amusing themselves with songs and dances. And he recognized among the songs the famous 'William of Nassau,' probably centuries old. Thus simple people in European countries are constantly singing enduring masterpieces of music along with much, of course, that is ephemeral.

In the very brief survey which we shall make of folk-songs as the student finds them to his hand to-day we shall be able to do no more than suggest the national characteristics of each group. Anything like a list of the fine songs of each nation, or an adequate appreciation of its popular music, would be impossible in less than a volume. Likewise, all the interesting questions of racial characteristics as affecting art, of technical development and international interchange, of æsthetic theory and melodic analysis, must be left quite to one side until there shall be written the adequate book on folk-music which as yet does not exist in the English language. The present chapter attempts only to suggest the contrasting characteristics of the different folk-song traditions and the amazing extent of the treasure which has until so recently remained for the most part unknown, or known only to be snubbed.

## II

England, Scotland, and Ireland, now grouped together as the tiniest part only, geographically speaking, of the British Empire, were in early times as distinct and as antagonistic, nationally, as Germany and France are to-day. The lack of means of communication and social organization made it possible for very different social and artistic traditions to flourish independently within a few miles of each other. Thus there grew up in these countries highly distinct musical traditions

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which have preserved their individuality even through these days of printing presses and phonographs. Each of these musical traditions—the English, the Scotch, and the Irish—had its roots in the earliest times of which we have any record. And it is evident that the musical life of these countries was vigorous in the extreme. The beauty and individuality of the Scotch and Irish songs are familiar, but it has been accepted as axiomatic until recently that England was an unmusical nation—that she had neither the geniuses to create nor the people to appreciate the finest and sincerest musical beauty. Especially it was supposed that she had no truly creative folk-song. Certainly it is true that England for centuries stifled her folk-song, keeping it among the peasant classes, dumb and suppressed, where Germany coaxed hers upward to illumine and inspire the whole nation to great deeds. Recent investigators, notably Mr. Cecil Sharp, have unearthed in Somersetshire and elsewhere a great wealth of popular songs, most of them never before set on paper, but many of them showing great antiquity and distinctive beauty. This folk-art existed for centuries among the almost unlettered classes without the nation as a whole being aware of the fact. Now that the songs have been noted down and published it can never again be said that England, in the roots of her, is unmusical or uncreative in popular song. These songs, which are all the more charming for never having felt the influence of learned music, are almost as peculiar and inimitable as those of Scotland or Russia. Those of ancient origin—roughly speaking, from Elizabeth's time or previous—are modal in style. But the modes are not the usual ones of the melodic minor or its most familiar variation, the Doric. They are the queerest things imaginable to modern ears, strange scales with raised sixths and lowered sevenths, melting from minor into major and back again. The feeling for the tonic is



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often very vague, the chief note of the scale being sometimes the second or the fourth or the fifth. These unquestionable evidences of antiquity lend a strange charm to the melodies. And the charm is one that is distinct from that of every other national folk-music.

The earliest of the English songs, barring a few questionable specimens, probably date from the time of Henry VIII (1491-1547), who was himself an accomplished musician and composer of several excellent songs. Among these are the Boar's Head Carol, antedating 1521, still sung at Christmas gatherings; and the traditional tune for Shakespeare's lyric, 'Oh, Mistress Mine.' Some of the simple airs to which the old Robin Hood ballads were sung also date from this period. The traditional air for the Chevy Chase ballads dates from the time of Charles I. But from this time on what passed in England for folk-songs were usually nothing but popular songs of the moment, published like any others and sung widely among the middle classes. These songs will be treated in another chapter. For our purpose here we must now skip more than three centuries and come down to the time when the interest in folk-song and folk-dancing began to revive in England. For the recent crop of folk-songs we are indebted to the labors of investigators like Mr. Sharp, patient, painstaking, sympathetic, and admirably equipped in point of musical technique. These men combine the qualities of the artist and the scientist. They have passed quite beyond the attitude of the eighteenth century collectors of folk-poetry—such distinguished men as Bishop Percy and Sir Walter Scott—who did their work out of personal enthusiasm but felt obliged to apologize for the poems they found. (Herder, who worked in Germany about the same time, was the one man who took the modern attitude, which is equally scholarly, scientific, and artistic.) The modern investigators feel their obligations to preserve the

## SCOTCH FOLK-SONG

songs exactly as they come from the lips of the people. When they publish collections of these songs for popular use they supply accompaniments which are sometimes sophisticated and, in Mr. Sharp's case, scholarly and delightful. But they seek always to preserve the letter and the spirit of the melodies in their arrangements. Such singers as the Misses Fuller, and Yvette Gilbert and her pupil Miss Loraine Wyman have spread the knowledge of the folk-songs of England and France and have demonstrated the great beauty of them to thousands who had never suspected it.

The English songs, fine as they are from a technical standpoint, have no very great emotional range. A few, like the famous 'Willow' song, strike a deep note of sorrow, but by far the greater portion are lively songs of the open-air or of festal gatherings. They reveal a vigorous sense of touch, a whole-hearted joy in the primitive feelings of the human body, in the invigorating English out-of-doors. They are clear-cut and literal—recalling the type of life and feeling which we associate with 'the roast beef of old England.' Their naïveté is that of an exuberant joy in the commonplace joys of life. We may mention such songs as 'The Wraggle Taggle Gipsies, O!' and 'The Holly and the Ivy' for their inspiring physical vigor. Such songs as 'God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen' (old tune), the Wassail song from Sussex, or the Sheep-shearing Song from Somerset, are worthy of much study as fine examples of the old English use of modal scales.

The Scotch songs, of all true folk-songs the world over, have for many decades been the most familiar. No nation, except perhaps Russia, has been more vigorously creative in its folk-music than Scotland. Many excellent judges regard the Scotch folk-music as the finest in the world. It is probably quite as ancient as any. It entered into the lives of the Scotch people from the earliest times, when the Highland bards sang

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their praises to little tribal chieftains or narrated in rude verse the battles between one clan and another. There is a very old harper's tune in existence, probably much modified in the course of the centuries but still eloquent of antiquity, which suggests the majesty of the days gone by. (It may be found under its modern title, 'Harp of the Highlands.') A large proportion of these tunes have lost their original words and taken on new ones. Robert Burns stimulated the process by writing words of his own (among them some of the greatest of his poems) for well-known melodies. The loss of the old texts, which were often crude or indecent, is, on the whole, of little moment from the artistic standpoint, especially since Burns, one of the finest folk-spirits of all ages, wrote words which fit the mouths of the people like their own. Perhaps, too, his words, as in the case of 'Scots Wha Hae,' helped to keep the old tunes alive and popular. Burns is one of the rare instances of a conscious artist who has been able to meddle with folk-art without making himself ridiculous.

A large number of the Scotch songs are written in the pentatonic or five-note scale—our ordinary major with the fourth and seventh omitted. Whether this was due to some early form of the Scotch bagpipe or to the genius of the people is still an open question.\* But it is certain that the Scotch have given an individual flavor to their songs by means of this scale without betraying the least embarrassment over the absence of the two notes. Who imagines, for instance, until it is pointed out, that the magnificent 'Auld Lang Syne' is wholly in the pentatonic? The pentatonic feeling runs through nearly all the Scotch songs and in a large proportion of them exists almost in full purity. The occasional use of the fourth and seventh in the tunes of 'Scots Wha Hae' or 'The Campbells Are Com-

\* Cf. Vol. I, chap. VI.

## IRISH FOLK-SONG

ing' is unessential and probably a recent modification.

The range of feeling in the Scotch songs is almost equal to that of music itself. 'Scots Wha Hae' ranks with the three or four finest patriotic songs the world over. No grander hymn than 'Auld Lang Syne' has ever been sung; even *Adeste Fideles*, that treasure of the modern hymnal, seems to take on a certain triviality beside its irresistible rhythm. And what dance tune can be found that contains such an inexhaustible supply of life as 'The Campbells Are Coming' or 'A Highland Lad My Love Was Born'? Where can one match the pensive sadness of 'Loch Lomond' or the sentimental tenderness of 'Will Ye Gang Over the Lee'? Some of the Jacobite songs—'Charlie Is My Darling' or 'The Piper of Dundee'—are inimitable for high spirits. One who turns over the pages of a book of Scotch folk-songs will find melodies of deep emotion unsurpassed in all song literature. Scotch song has also been materially enriched by conscious composers, though never, perhaps, by eminent ones. We need only mention the impressive 'Caller Herrin,' or 'Annie Laurie,' one of the greatest folk-songs of all times. A thorough knowledge of Scotch folk-songs will acquaint the singer with almost every fundamental type of lyric utterance.

The Irish folk-song, likewise, is very fine, but it has, on the whole, neither the flexible range nor the supreme sense of artistic fitness possessed by the Scotch. The dominant moods are two: one the lively dance spirit, represented by the Irish jigs and reels; and the other the richly sentimental and even tragic tone of the love songs. As it happens, Irish folk-song has undergone the same process as the Scotch in having a native poet supply in great abundance new words to the old tunes. The 'Irish Melodies' of Sir Thomas Moore are pretentious poems designed to supplant the homely words of the folk-poets. But if Burns escaped being ridiculous

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in his attempt to supply his native country with a new folk-art, Moore emphatically did not. Nothing could be more incongruous than his pompous poems with their dreary romantic paraphernalia of harps and fair ladies. As poems his lyrics have only the virtues of the drawing-room, a mellifluous flow of words and a certain sensuous grace. As folk-art they are a painful absurdity. They evoke abstractions and conventional poetic phrases where the popular genius goes unerringly to concrete fact. They have the dreary sameness of the second-rate talent where the folk-poetry has all the variety of the commonplace things of this world and of the ordinary people in it. Yet Moore's words are in many instances firmly wedded to the music in the popular mind, and it is not likely that a divorce will ever be achieved. This is doubtless because, false as the poet was to the spirit of the music, he caught and persuasively stated the romantic sentimentality of the Celtic nature.

Some of the older Irish songs have an archaic flavor not less marked than the English. The Doric mode especially is used sometimes with savage vigor. Indeed, the Irish as the race of warriors are represented almost exclusively in the older songs—songs like 'Remember the Glories of Brian the Brave' or 'The Sword Shining Brightly' (Moore's words), which in their crude martial frenzy can hardly be matched the world over. The innumerable jigs and reels, some of which are of the finest quality, are often close to the Scotch in physical energy, but in nearly every case they preserve a certain note of sadness. Perhaps the best of all the Irish songs are the sentimental ones. The fine tunes to which Moore set his words 'The Harp that Once Through Tara's Halls' and 'When in Death' strike a wonderfully deep chord of emotion. It is hard to realize the great number of sentimental Irish tunes which are of the highest beauty. They suffer, however, too

## FRENCH FOLK-SONG

often from excess. The long drawn cadences are hard to render honestly; in their excess of feeling they are apt to sound insincere. They lack the clear-cut statement which makes the Scotch songs so unfailingly true to the highest demands of art. Yet the folk-song of Ireland is a product of which any nation might be proud. And, on the whole, the folk-music of the British Isles is their worthiest contribution to musical literature. In former ages these islands were not inferior to any country in Europe in musical vigor. As the centuries have passed and left England far behind in musical creation these songs have remained as a proof of the sound healthfulness and the exuberant creativeness of her popular genius.

### III

The French folk-song more than any other has contained from early times the spirit of its conscious art. Or perhaps France's conscious art has, more than in most countries, been true to the genius of its people as revealed in its folk-art. Its melodies are rarely rich and luscious—rarely even emotional in the more strenuous sense of the term. Often they seem, at first hearing, to be cold and thin. But such a view is, of course, false. The French melodies have both emotion and sensuous beauty. But it is in the famous French 'taste' not to shout one's message to the heavens. You do not appreciate the meaning of these melodies until you have come to know and love them, just as you do not appreciate the meaning of a child until you have come to know and love him. You must be on the alert, sensitive to catch the meaning of a whisper or a gesture. And, in addition to the meaning, you must learn to love the formal beauty of a French melody. No nation has carried perfection of form, even in the smallest things, to such a pitch as the French. The opening

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phrase of a French folk-tune may seem almost meaningless and pointless. But somewhere in it there is a suggestion of something distinctive in it. Watch for this, then follow it out in the other phrases—a gentle contrast, a delicate indiscretion, a comforting restatement. In some moods we shall find this whispered statement more stimulating, more thrilling than any burst of Italian passion.

As early as the fifteenth century we have French songs which show these qualities of restraint and delicate design. Of such we may instance *Sy je perdoys mon amy* and *Vray Dieu d'amours*. As we come to later centuries we find a host of songs (collected in great numbers by Weckerlin) which are scarcely to be distinguished from the simple songs of the great French composers. The delightful *chanson*, *O, ma tendre Musette*, is accredited to Monsigny, but it is an open question whether the melody was not taken by him bodily from a folk-tune. Many are the *villanelles* and *musettes* which are of folk origin. In no other country are the folk-music and the art-music less distinct. A few French songs, like *Le pauvre laboureur*, show the freedom and irregularity of phrase which betoken a development independent of art-music. This particular song is almost unrhythmical, probably a development from one or two stereotyped phrases, like the street-cries of Paris and of some of the Italian cities. But irregular songs are unusual. The French popular genius seems to have the same sense for design that has made the great men of France distinguished, and this sense is shown almost universally in its songs. (See Appendix for French-Canadian Folk-song.)

There could hardly be a more violent contrast than between the folk-music of the two Latin countries, France and Italy. The Italians are famous for their violent emotions, and these are revealed in their folk-

## ITALIAN FOLK-SONG

songs, puffing like a steam engine. The utmost of passionate expression, by any means at hand—this seems to be the ideal of a goodly portion of the songs. Where the French songs are reserved the Italian are frenzied; where the French are delicate the Italian are like a sledge-hammer; where the French use a needle the Italian use an ax. This statement must be made with some exceptions, notably the songs of Venice and certain other northern localities. The Venetian songs are reserved and chiselled. Many of them might have been written by Mozart. They never go to excess of emotion. They are often as formally perfect as the French. The song known as 'The Fisher' (which has practically become a folk-song in Germany) may be taken as a fair example of this graceful and discreet type of lyric. As we go farther south the heat and sensuousness of the land show more and more in the music: Naples has a type of folk-song all her own. It sometimes shows the grace of the Venetian song, but never its reserve. The lighter songs all have an ardor of their own, for the Southern Italian is never abstract. But their lightness carries with it a certain fickleness, as though the lover expected to serenade at least a dozen fair ladies before the night was done. *La Vera Sorrentina* is one of the best of this type. The Neapolitan are perhaps the best known of all the Italian songs, and there are thousands of them that have been published. A large proportion of these are not strictly folk-songs, having been written by conscious composers (who, however, were of the people and composed for the people). For it seems that the folk-genius of the Italians was almost dormant in music for several centuries. But these semi-folk-songs are among the best. The more modern ones nearly always betray a certain vulgarity, a certain commonplaceness somewhere in their outline—a fault which is not often to be charged against the genuine folk-song. But one is will-



## THE VOICE AND VOCAL MUSIC

ing to forgive them this, for the sake of the loveliness which is beneath it all. The strains of *Oh, sole mio* have already gone round the world, and *Oh, Maria* is scarcely inferior. And when the Italian Song (especially the Sicilian) breaks out in full passion it is not to be matched for crude emotional power the world over. Any one of these songs, as, for instance, the fine one known from its refrain as *O, Mama mia*, shows the inspiration of the bloody Italian operas of the 'nineties.

Much of the Italian folk-music is enlivened with the most powerful rhythm imaginable. The dance is cultivated in Italy as it is in scarcely any other country in the world. Many of the Spanish rhythms are to be found in the Italian songs, a relic of the times when the Spaniards held Sicily and the southern parts of the peninsula. We should not forget, either, the inimitable joke-songs of the Italians, the clear source of the *opera buffa*, which has been cultivated successfully by no other people. The love of the Italians for a joke has been noted from the earliest mediæval times. We need only listen to the Italian fruit-merchant trying to convince the ward politician that Columbus discovered Ireland to know that the *tempo allegro giocoso* is as alive to-day in the southern Latins as it ever was. The innumerable joke songs of Italy present a peculiar problem to the singer. They must be sung with the most expert enunciation, with a fine technique that conceals all art, and with a spirit bursting with fun. Perhaps it would be truer to say that they are impossible to any but the Italian born and bred. Their purely musical value, it must be admitted, is usually slight; but they have none the less a high place in folk-song literature. It is only fair to say that the musicianship of the Italian songs is often careless and faulty. Especially is this likely to be true in the accompaniments, which are always of the simplest possible description

## ITALIAN FOLK-SONG

and frequently become monotonous with their limited supply of chords in regular succession. Yet this fault is only one more mark of the Italian genius, to which the melody—that is, the voice part, the human part—is all-important.

The Spanish songs are much less known than they deserve. Of Spain, as of England, it can be said that its folk-songs are its chief musical contribution. The pure folk-song of Spain, given to the world chiefly through the researches of the composer Albeniz, is highly sectional and local, primitive, almost untouched by the traditions of the great world of music. Just across this low range of mountains there may be another quite different type of song, with different scales and different rhythms and a different type of emotional utterance corresponding to the sectional variation of temperament. In addition to this pure folk-song, there is an extensive Spanish folk-music which is somewhat more sophisticated and much better known. It is this class that chiefly contains the wonderful dance-tunes which we associate with Spain—for here rhythm is cultivated as nowhere else in the world. The chief rhythms—those of the *Habañera*, the *Seguidilla*, the *Bolero*, the *Fandango*, and the rest—have in the Spanish songs a poignancy which it is impossible to analyze. The melodies seem built on and for the rhythms. Both may seem simple and literal, yet there is a peculiar fitness in this simplicity which is ever the mark of the folk-genius, and which in this case gives the rhythms an unbelievable quantity of physical drive. The chief geographical and political sections of Spain have preserved their individuality in their folk-songs. The Castilian song is light and sparkling. The Catalanian is sombre and intense. The Andalusian is sensuous and passionate. In the singing of all these songs there is scarcely a trace of the intellectual factor. They are to be sung in a sort of divine frenzy. It is not too much

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to say that they must be sung with the whole physical body. For their powerful rhythm must be felt in every nerve and muscle, else it cannot be expressed in the voice. Of all songs these of Spain demand the most of the merely physical—of bone and nerves and muscles.

### IV

The German folk-songs, because they are the best known of all, will here be treated briefly. They have, as we shall so often have occasion to point out, that faculty of concentrating intense and elevated emotion in a simple phrase of a few notes. The great progressions that ring in Bach, the great cadences which thunder forth in the Lutheran chorale—these we feel in all German popular song. The number of these songs is as the sands of the sea. The emotional range is almost that of the human heart itself. The melodic organization is much more complex than in the case of the Italian songs. Sometimes it becomes even austere. But, on the whole, no nation has songs which go so straight to the heart. They are not remarkable for rhythm nor in general for the lighter qualities prized by the French and the north Italians. Their character is, rather, homely and intimate. Some of them reflect the vigorous and rather rough spirits of German youth. More reflect the exaggerated sentimentality of German middle age. Yet this sentimentality, while it is introspective, is never morbid. It is founded deep in the heart of a magnificently healthy people and is no more than the honest expression of a passing mood. From the time of the Minnesingers and their charmingly graceful ditties the idealism of the German people has been revealed in their singing. Frequently this takes on a religious tinge, so that the Lutheran church could adopt true folk-tunes for its hymns without incongru-

## GERMAN AND NORSE FOLK-SONG

ity. Often the spirit of quite secular songs is essentially religious, as in that magnificent song of Silcher's—

'Aennchen von Tharau, mein Reichthum, mein Gut,  
Du bist mein Leben, mein Fleisch und mein Blut.'

Certainly these songs of Germany can, of all folk-songs, least bear any insincerity or affectation. They seem to be a touchstone for determining genuineness of soul—that quality which the Germans call *Echtheit*. They, above all other songs, demand soundness of musician-ship and honesty of method.

Unwillingly leaving these songs with these few remarks, we turn to the Scandinavian countries, which are closely allied to Germany in their folk-music, yet show a definite though subtle individuality. The Danish songs retain the sincerity of the German, but add, perhaps, a little more lightness of touch, a little more feeling for delicacy of design. Their relation with the songs of the northern Scandinavian countries is tenuous but it can be noticed after a little study. The songs of Sweden are much more individual, though they can hardly be said to surpass the German in any particular. Most popular among them are the famous 'Neck Polka,' the spirited 'Marching Song,' and the old ballad, 'Little Karen,' the last a melody wonderful in its combination of literal musical statement with subtle artistic grace. Norway, most distant of the three countries, has quite naturally shown itself most individual in its folk-music. It is the individuality which many critics have found in the music of Grieg. It bears an air of mystery; one hardly knows whether of the past or of the future. It suggests at times the downright-ness of the old Vikings, and at others the 'atmospheric' quality of the modern composers. However one may feel about this, it is certain that the spirit is healthy and stimulating. For variety and interest the folk-music of Norway can rank among the best.

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### V

The folk-music of the Hungarians has been made universally popular through the Hungarian Rhapsodies of Liszt, who was one of the first to perceive its high artistic possibilities. It has been generally supposed that this folk-music was invented by the Gypsies, who have always been regarded as the Hungarian musicians *par excellence*. Liszt regarded it so. Competent investigators agree that the melodies themselves are the product of the Hungarian people and that the ornaments and stylistic qualities alone have been added by the Gypsies, who, according to this view, are incapable of true invention. It is at least certain that the Gypsies are the representative musicians of Hungary to-day and have wholly stamped Hungarian folk-music with their individuality. It has been said that Hungary has no vocal folk-music—no folk-song at all. This, of course, is true only in a limited sense. But it is certainly true that all the music has a predominantly instrumental character and that the greater portion of it is possible only on instruments. The Gypsies themselves, though usually without formal musical education, are frequently marvellous masters of the violin in their own way. Their love for long and meaningless decoration is famous. No tune enters their keeping that does not emerge covered from beginning to end with trills, shakes, slides, turns, scales, and cadenzas. The *rubato* instinct among them is very strong. At the same time the rhythmical and dance instinct is almost unsurpassed. And, as anyone familiar with the Rhapsodies well knows, these three qualities—namely the instrumental, the decorative and the rhythmic—have stamped themselves indelibly on all Hungarian folk-music. The Gypsies tend to mutilate a tune past recognition by their wanton decora-

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tion. But when they are able to keep their instinct in control they leave the melody glittering with decorative richness but firm and vigorous in outline.

The chief external characteristic of the Hungarian melodies,—their accented grace-note (a feature scarcely to be found in any other folk-music the world over, except to a smaller degree in the Scotch)—is said to come from the character of the Hungarian language, which is inclined to heavily accented first syllables. A more probable explanation would be that it comes from the nature of the violin, on which most of these melodies were doubtless composed. For in the case of a short grace-note, the violinist's bow has hardly time to take a new stroke between the grace-note and the chief note; hence both are taken on one stroke, and as the beginning of the stroke is the natural place for the accent the grace-note, however short, tends to take on all the accent of a true first note of the rhythmic measure. Yet such abstract discussion is empty in the face of the melodies themselves. Many of these are songs and excellent ones—whether composed for the words originally or fitted out with words later makes little difference. And many of them are distinctly singable, though they demand a robust vocal mechanism such as few parlor-trained singers possess. But whether sung or not they are all glorified dances. The *rubato* may be elaborate, but the feeling of rhythm is always present. Many of the songs preserve the form of the national dance, the Czardas, beginning with a slow *Lassan* and ending with the violent *Friska*, as in the Hungarian Rhapsodies. There may be pauses and cadenzas between the two, there may be pauses and long *ritardandos* in the body of the dance itself (as frequently in the well-known Brahms arrangements of Hungarian dances), but the firm rhythmic sense is always there.

The beauty of the Hungarian melodies, merely as

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melodies, is unsurpassed. The great melody which Liszt used in the Fourteenth Hungarian Rhapsody, and which has since come to be used as the national song, to the fine words which in the German version commence *Wenn dem Ungarvolke Gott viel Leiden gab*—this has become a true folk-song by adoption, though it is not one in origin. No country ever had a more glorious hymn for its national praise. Several dance-tunes given by Reimann \* are of the highest quality—especially *Zigeunermusik*, *Der Seele Spiegel*, and *Drunten im Tale*, and *Erwartung*, the last being a melody which served Brahms for one of his ‘Hungarian Dances.’ Another matchless tune is one translated by Reimann as *In Grosswardein*. Here we see used to full value (in a melody of great simplicity) several of the most distinctive qualities of the Hungarian music, namely the accented grace note, the peculiar minor scale having a flatted sixth and a raised seventh, and always emphasizing the skip between, and the conventional phrase structure, which always repeats the first phrase, note for note, in the dominant. Indeed, no songs are better worth study for their clear and solid architecture. Francis Alexander Korbay (born, Pesth, 1848; died, 1914) was one of the chief enthusiasts for the Hungarian folk-song and has helped by his collections and editions to spread the love of them. His arrangements are sometimes elaborate and often not true to the spirit of the original, but they sufficiently preserve the national spirit to foreign ears. And it has always been true that folk-music must first go through a stage of adaptation and arrangement before people are willing to listen to it in its purity. Of the Korbay songs at least one fine example, ‘Had a Horse,’ has become familiar in American concert halls.

\* Heinrich Reimann: *Ausländische Volkslieder*.

## SLAVIC FOLK-SONGS

### VI

The Russian folk-songs, as rich in variety and intensity as those of any country on earth, present more preliminary difficulties to the foreign music-lover than any others. As in most other countries, the real appreciation of folk-music in Russia is a matter of the last half century. The Russian songs which were best known before then bore the same relation to the genuine article that the popular English songs of the eighteenth century bore to the Somerset songs of which we have spoken—that is, they were rather civilized, perhaps consciously composed, and contained far more of the conventional than of the national. Such a song is 'The Red Sarafan,' a fine melody, but far removed from the genuine peasant folk-song. Glinka, founder of the modern Russian school of composition, recognized the distinctive qualities of the Russian popular music, and introduced some of its effects very tentatively into his operas and songs. Rubinstein hazarded the statement that the Russian folk-song was more varied and profound than that of any other land. But Rubinstein, being all German in his training, did not follow the obvious moral. It remained for the great group of 'neo-Russian' composers, under the inspiring leadership of Balakireff, to make the Russian folk-song the source and standard of Russian composition. Several of this group made researches among folk-songs or collections of them and studied them in what we have called the modern spirit, which is equally scientific, scholarly, and artistic. More recently the Russian government has spent considerable sums on scientific investigation among the peasants, and the results of these researches, especially in the great work of Mme. Lineva, have served as a standard in folk-research the world over. The earlier collections of Balakireff, Rim-



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sky-Korsakoff, and others, though as yet untranslated, are sources of deep delight for the student who will take a little trouble among dusty libraries.

The great body of Russian folk-songs is far nearer to the primitive than is the popular music of Italy, Scotland, and Germany. Many of the loveliest tunes are mere snatches of melody. The more highly organized tunes are frequently irregular and crude. The scales are usually distinctive, and the tonic is inclined to be very movable, if not entirely absent. The minor, of course, predominates, as in all primitive music. It is used with the utmost distinction, showing how utterly Russian life (except in the highest classes) has for centuries been isolated from the influence of Western Europe. The common impression, because of the predominance of this minor, is that Russian songs are all 'sad' or 'moody.' This is not just, for the minor, which is an expressive means with us, is nothing more than a convention in Russian folk-music. It is the material out of which the music is made. It can be manipulated to express almost any emotion which the singer can feel. Hence the notion that the range of Russian folk-songs is narrow is quite false. They have a remarkably wide range, from the deepest gloom, through the tenderest sentimentality, to the fiercest exhilaration of physical life. The irregularity of the melodies, too, is not necessarily a sign of crudeness, but often an instrument of the highest expressive potency.

The brief studies which will be made later in this volume into Russian art-song can have but little meaning, except in relation to the folk-songs which are the source of it. The irregularity of metre in Moussorgsky's songs, the barbarity of some of Borodine's and Rachmaninoff's, are the direct outcome of these composers' studies in folk-song. It is difficult to mention these songs by name, since few of the texts have been

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translated into English. Yet it would be a pity if the student were altogether debarred from a knowledge of this wonderful literature on that account. The standard collections of Russian folk-music are available, though somewhat difficult to obtain. And though the words are printed in fearsome Russian, the music is in an international language. And it is of course true that many of the Russian songs are to be found in general folk-song collections and may be discovered with a little searching. Those who read French will find in Mme. Lineva's work, published in two languages by the Russian government, an admirable discourse on Slavic song, thoroughly scientific, yet clear and without great technicality. In this work the interested musical student will find one of the most fascinating subjects imaginable—the growth of independent polyphony and counterpoint spontaneously among the singers of the melodies, a thing unthinkable to those of us who have learned counterpoint from dry text books.

## BOHEMIAN AND POLISH FOLK-SONG

Bohemia and Poland, though Slavic in blood, are widely separated from Russia in their art. The latter has for many centuries been Roman Catholic in religion, and had attained a high degree of Western culture and refinement when Muscovy was still semi-barbarian. In fact, the political rivalry between the eastern and western Slavs, intensified by the difference in religion, led the Poles to look to the west for their friends and their cultural models. Bohemia, too, as early as the thirteenth century, was peculiarly western in its ideals. It possessed the earliest real university, and nurtured the non-secular attitude toward learning which later came to such glorious fruit in France and Germany. Further, the Bohemians were the earliest

## THE VOICE AND VOCAL MUSIC

Protestants and free-thinkers, and showed the most enlightened political aspirations in an age of darkness. So, in spite of blood and language, these two nations show in their art a dominant kinship with Germany.

One of the earliest Bohemian folk-songs, *Sirotek* ('The Waif'), might almost be taken for a German chorale of the sixteenth century. Other popular songs, like *Wsak nam tak* ('The Sweetheart') and *Dobromyslua husicka* ('The Happy Gosling'), are almost Tyrolese in their mellifluous facility. Still another fine song, *Na tech Kolodejskejch* ('Vain Regrets'), might in parts be a German children's song. Again the song, *Pod tim nasim okeneckem* ('Under Our Cottage Window'), with its 'snaps' and sharp accents, suggest the melodies of Hungary. Thus Bohemia, in her folk-music, shows the influence of her neighbors on all sides, but scarcely a trace of the indigenous Slavic stock. Many of the songs show a high degree of formal perfection, and the sentiment, especially in the tenderer moods, is often deep and moving. Such a lyric as the lullaby, *Hajej muj andilku*, may rank with the best of any land in sheer beauty. If we look among the Bohemian songs for the nationalism that reveals itself in strange scales and irregular rhythm we shall find scarcely a trace of it. The metre and melodic line are always mature and polished. But with our inner ear we may detect, in the best songs, an endearing quality, a sweet loveliness, which speaks with a distinct and national voice.

The qualities of Polish national music have been made known most widely in the mazurkas of Chopin. These must not be taken as representing the real qualities of the Polish folk-song, but they offer an excellent point of departure. In some ways the songs of Poland show a racial relation with the Russian. The swift-moving energy, the recurring and pervading melancholy, find their parallels in the music of the eastern Slavs. But the scale is nearly always the familiar

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major, or a slightly modified minor. The western nations outgrew the uncertain tonality of the old modes much earlier than the east, and Poland, with her eyes always toward the west, doubtless adopted the technique of music as she found it. Thus such a song as the *Krakowiak* (an irresistible dance movement), though it recalls in some vague way the spirit of Little Russian music, lends itself perfectly to conventional German harmonization. Another song, *Gdy wczystem polu* ('In Summer'), might have been thrown off in one of Chopin's idle moments. What these songs have, above all other qualities, is grace. No nation, in its folk-music, has used rhythm with greater delicacy. They recall to us a Poland of the story-books, a land of dilettantism and social graces. More than any other folk-songs, except the French, they demand in their interpretation a subtle ear and a firm artistic control.

The United States of America has its own folk-music of a sort, a part of it quite indigenous. This part is the music of the North American Indians, which is more primitive than any other large body of folk-music in our possession. There are, also, the songs of the western cowboys, the 'Spirituals' and slave-songs of the southern negroes, and the songs of Stephen Foster, all of which are worthy to rank as folk-songs. All these examples of American music have been exhaustively treated in Volume IV (Chapter XI).

## CHAPTER VI

### THE EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF SONG

Song in early Christian times—The age of chivalry—The troubadours and trouvères—The minnesingers—The mastersingers; the Lutheran revival—Polyphonic eclipse of song.

#### I

WE think of the first eight or ten centuries of the Christian era as a chasm between the ancient and the modern. But this is of course not strictly true, least of all in folk-music. In the church, indeed, music struggled slowly and painfully, surrounded by doctrine and law. But in the music, as in the customs, of the people, there was no break. The apostolic succession of song continued unbroken from the time of the Greeks to the time of Schubert. Through all the mediæval period folk-music was flourishing, growing in richness and in influence steadily up to the time when it entered art music by the back door, so to speak, stealing into the Catholic ritual. For many centuries the songs of the old world continued in the new. For the Christian era did not come all at once. It attained formal dominance when Constantine adopted it as the official religion of Rome. But it needed many centuries more before it could attain complete sway over people's hearts. Pagan customs and pagan songs were still living and beautiful. The Christian missionaries gained their hold over the people by compromising with the past. The old festivals were not rejected in favor of the new; they were merged with the new. Thus Christmas, among the Germanic nations,

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was made to absorb an older festival of the turning of the sun, and the mistletoe, which had had a profound religious significance for the Pagans, became one of the minor symbols of the Christian feast and continues to-day an essential part of the Yuletide festivities, as we know.

And thus it was with the people's songs. Men's beliefs were Christianized, but men's feelings remained Pagan. And the two existed side by side for centuries without trouble. Charlemagne ordered a collection to be made of German songs (all of Pagan origin) and did not feel that there was anything impious in his action. The Pagan was honored along with the Christian just as, some five centuries later, the Classical was honored in the Renaissance. But the millennial year was approaching, when men expected the world to end, or Christ to come and take personal charge of his Kingdom. And throughout all Christendom there arose a desire in men to make themselves perfect for the second coming. And so arose a mania for exterminating all that remained of the old world. Charlemagne's son, Ludwig the Pious, despised the German songs his father had collected. And it was so all over Europe. In these years the last vestiges of Paganism were stamped out, except for the sweet souvenirs of it which the institution of the mistletoe and similar symbols have retained.

Pagan songs of the early Christian period were mostly in the hands of wandering minstrels and storytellers who roamed the world in great numbers. These men, like the songs they sang, were direct descendants of the Pagan world. One well accredited theory says that the Italian minstrels were the gladiators of Roman times, and their descendants. The last of the Roman gladiatorial shows was held about the beginning of the fifth century. After that Christian sentiment forbade these bloody entertainments, and the gladiators,

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the entertainers *par excellence* of Roman times, found themselves without a means of livelihood. They wandered from town to town, giving exhibitions of strength and agility in the market places, just as the acrobats do to this day in European cities. They became a separate caste, almost a separate race. Inevitably they invented or appropriated songs with which to entertain their admirers between the acts. Some of them became itinerant merchants, selling molasses or some other delicacy and attracting the crowds by their music. Sometimes they had dancing bears, or camels, or trick monkeys.

In the more serious nothern countries—Germany and England—they were probably the remnants of the old priesthood. Religion has always needed music as a support, and the old priests were themselves bards, or had bards in their service to sing their doctrines. As they fell into disrepute with the advance of Christianity, they had to seek their living as best they might, and they became minstrels, singing the old sagas and stories which people still loved. Often they became attached to the service of the courts. The chronicler Robert Ware says that the battle of Hastings, in which William the Conqueror subjected the Saxons, was opened by the minstrel or *jongleur* Taillefer, attached to the Norman army, who advanced singing of the fabulous exploits of some hero of the time and performing feats of agility with his lance and sword, which struck terror into the Saxons, who thought his dexterity must be the effect of witchcraft. But more often the minstrels were popular entertainers, with a collection of tricks—hence the name of *jongleur*, which means player or trickster, and gives us our English word ‘juggler.’

Their music had no very exalted status, since it was only a ‘side-line’ to their merchandise or performance. But to the people of the time it was as important as

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our orchestral concerts and operas are to us. For it effected the interchange of art and ideas between province and province and between nation and nation. The minstrels were rarely the inventors of the songs they sang. The music of the time was genuine folk-music and the minstrels only learned and disseminated the popular songs. But they represented the whole institution of secular music in the early Christian age.

In their roving life, the minstrels tended to become wretchedly immoral. They sometimes formed themselves into bands for the acting of plays, taking women along with them, and these bands became the synonym for dissolute living. Sometimes they were beggars pure and simple, willing to get money by any means except working, and purchasable equally to spread a scandal or commit a murder. They had no home and no citizenship. In 554 A. D. Childebert promulgated very stringent laws for the suppression of their licentiousness. Philip Augustus, King of France, caused them to be expelled from his domains. They were outside the law and its protection. For centuries they were regarded as the evil children of another race. A citizen might attack or insult a minstrel and the latter had no recourse in law, except the privilege of striking his opponent's *shadow*. This outlawing of musicians continued (in the statute books, at least) for many years. There are traces of it still in certain lands. Even New York state, it is said, has an un repealed statute somewhere in its dusty books authorizing the arrest of 'common showmen.'

This prejudice, in the early years, seems to have been generally justified. The lives of the minstrels were certainly dissolute. Their personal characters had all the unattractive qualities of an inferior race—to dying for money or favor, fickleness and vindictiveness. They had to truckle to the great, and flatter the prejudices of the masses. They had, moreover,



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the means of making themselves feared by the knights and barons of whom they demanded money in return for their music. For if they were allowed to leave the castle disgruntled, nothing was easier for them than to spread abroad among the people scandals concerning the great men and ladies, the tale that Sir Knight was a wife-beater and that his lady was having an affair with her page. A certain jongleur, Colin Muset, who plied his trade in Lorraine and Champagne in the thirteenth century, once had occasion to sing the following ditty to the noble of whom he had asked largess:

'Lord Count, I have the viol played  
Before yourself, within your hall,  
And you my service never paid  
Nor gave me any wage at all;  
                                  'Twas villainy.'

It is not difficult to catch the implied threat in these lines.

But the fickleness and flunkeyism of the minstrels served them well. When they had been expelled from France because of their libellous tongues, many of them were invited over to England by William de Longchamps, bishop of Ely, who governed the kingdom during the absence of Richard the Lionhearted, and who, anxious to blind the people to the vices of his régime, hired these singers to proclaim his virtues to the public. Thus art is continually being called to the glorification of vice and tyranny. But for such services the minstrels had their reward. So useful did they make themselves, wherever they went, that they received increasing marks of respect. When the Christian revival of the tenth and eleventh centuries came, they made themselves its apostles, singing the new songs in place of the old. The acting troupes presented miracle plays on Biblical or traditional religious subjects and were presently invited by the clergy

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to perform on the church steps or even within the church itself. Centuries later they had attained such dignity that they could organize themselves into guilds under the protection of the reigning prince. They had their aristocratic and exclusive labor unions, were employed to organize town bands, and in many places formed the nuclei for court orchestras.

Of the music of these minstrels in the early centuries we know next to nothing. There existed nothing at the time that could be called musical notation, and tradition, if it has brought any of their songs down to us, has changed them in the course of the centuries. We have, it is true, a spirited song, supposed to have been written on the death of Charlemagne, calling on Franks and Romans to lament and honor the lost sovereign. But this was probably not purely popular in its origin, else it would not have attained to writing. The words of a few ditties have been preserved. The celebrated 'Song of Roland,' dating from Charlemagne's time, was supposed to have been sung as late as the battle of Poitiers in 1356. But what chiefly assures us of the vigor of the popular music of the time was the wide variety of types it contained—patriotic songs, love songs, songs satirical and historical, and many others. We know also that the music was original and alive, quite in contrast to that of the church. For when the popular tradition was taken up by the aristocratic Troubadours and Trouvères in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the melodies had an independent character that proves a vigorous antecedent development. The old modes continued to dominate church music up to the fifteenth and even sixteenth centuries. But the songs of the Troubadours and Trouvères are often written in the modern major scale. The popular music of the ninth and tenth centuries had undergone the development that the church did not attain until five hundred years later.

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We know rather more concerning the instruments used by the wandering minstrels. They were of all the types which have since furnished out the modern orchestra. The harp, a remnant of the very earliest times, was favored by the more aristocratic musicians and steadily became enlarged as the technique of music widened. The lute (much like the modern guitar), most popular of amateur instruments in the time of the Renaissance, was widely used. All kinds of pipes, ancestors of the wood-wind instruments of our orchestras, flourished in a great variety of styles. And the incipient violin was represented by the rota, rebek, and vielle, figuring under a multitude of different names. Like the Saxon language during the Norman domination in England, popular music developed in the dark, without official sanction, finally coming forth, strong and mature, from its hiding and carrying everything before it.

### II

With the approach of the millennial year we find the beginnings of that institution which was to enframe all the life of the later middle ages—Chivalry. The first military games and tourneys appear in the reign of Charles the Bald, in the ninth century. From that time on, life became more pretentious, more individual, more refined. The chivalric ideal was professedly Christian. It preached what the Pagan could never have understood—reverence for womanhood and respect for the weak. Knights gained the church's special sanction when they devoted themselves to righting wrongs and rescuing women in distress. The tender poetry which in early mediæval times became attached to the figure of the Madonna, was now extended to all women—at least to all women of social standing. Because a woman had been chosen as the Mother of God all women were regarded as holy in her likeness. With

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this changed attitude toward the weaker sex there came a multitude of delicate shades of sentiment and an exaggerated devotion that would have seemed childish to the ancient Greeks. It was common for the Troubadours to profess the most ecstatic love for some woman of high rank, who was hardly expected to do more than smile in return. Love, in its more fanciful aspects, became the mania of the age.

It is not surprising, then, that the nobles of the time took up love, one might almost say, as an avocation. They had nothing to do, much of the time, but cultivate the fine arts. They caught the trick of making verses and melodies. It was natural that love should be the chief theme of their songs. And in Provence, the southeastern part of modern France, there arose toward the end of the eleventh century, the cult or institutions of the Troubadours. The Troubadours were primarily nobles, cultivating the arts as a pastime. But many men of lower rank also took up the fashion, winning their way through the beauty of their song. All that we regard as most typical of French art was in their music and verses—delicacy of wit and fancy, beauty of form, purity of diction. They represented the utmost refinement to which their age attained.

They did not, like the jongleurs, accept money for their singing, though they were proud to receive gifts from lords and ladies whom they praised. But they often retained the jongleurs in their service. They seem to have had ambitions of spreading their reputations as composers and, as it was unbecoming their rank to sing in the market-places, they hired jongleurs, as personal servants, to do it for them. Thus the wandering minstrel of the ninth century, while losing something of his artistic preëminence, gained no little in social dignity. Some gained high reputation. We recall the story of Blondel, minstrel to Richard the Lion-hearted, who, when his liege lord was a prisoner in

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Germany on his return from the Holy Land, sought him far and wide and made himself known by his singing outside the castle, later bringing help and liberty to his king.

In the north of France flourished the Trouvères, similar to the Troubadours of the south. They were less delicate in touch, less polished, but far more serious, frequently composing, in their own fashion, works of science and history, theology and philosophy. Among the Troubadours and Trouvères were Count Guillaume of Poitiers, Count Thibaut of Champagne, King of Navarre, and Adam de la Halle. The last named was not of noble blood, but gained high standing as singer to the Count of Artois. In Spain, as well as in France, the institution of courtly song took root and the noble singers were known as *Trobadores*. In Italy the singer was known as *Trovatore*, though the Provençal song did not gain much vogue in the land which was being stirred by the awakening of the Renaissance. The Trouvères, through the Norman court of London, influenced the native minstrelsy of England, thus spreading over half of Europe the fame of the Provençal song.

The variety of artistic forms cultivated by the Troubadours and Trouvères was great. Of them we can distinguish the dramatic works, the romances, the stories or *fabliaux*, and the lyric works proper. All of these, excepting, perhaps, the dramatic works, were at least in part sung to the accompaniment of a musical instrument. The romances sometimes approximated the length of epics, extending to 20,000 lines or more. Of the romances there is one charming and widely known example in 'Aucassin and Nicolette,' a long story of love and adventure, frequently interrupted with a lovely song. It is probable that these romances were recited in a somewhat formal manner through the more narrative parts, perhaps chanted in the emotional sections, leading up by means of a

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more and more musical delivery to the lyrics, which undoubtedly had their set melodies. The *fabliaux* were short and witty stories, usually satirical when not actually indecent. The lyrical poems were divided by their singers into many classes, the distinctions being largely nominal or fanciful. We can recall the *canzonets*, or love-songs, including the serenade (the 'evening song') and the *aubade* ('morning song'). The *pastourelle*, or conventionalized song of shepherd life, became the Pastoral of the Golden Age of France, one of the most typical art-forms of the pre-Revolutionary period. There were further the *sirvantes*, written to praise some beneficent prince; the roundelays, with a set refrain after each verse or stanza; and the dance songs, intended to be sung actually during dancing. Then there were the *tenzone*, contentious songs, usually in dialog, often set debates on some nice point of love. Sometimes the *tenzone* were little masterpieces of satire. One, composed by a monk, has been preserved to us. It represents a debate or trial, in which the monks accuse the women of having stolen the art of painting invented for ecclesiastical purposes and having applied it to their cheeks. The women reply that the monks are no worse off because their sex is able to cover the wrinkles under their eyes. Finally St. Peter and St. Lawrence adjudge that the women shall be allowed from the ages of twenty to thirty-five to paint in. But, adds the poet, 'the contract was soon broken by the women: they lay on more red and white than was ever used for a votive painting and have in consequence raised the price of saffron and other dye-stuffs.'

We should not leave the Troubadours without referring to the *Cours d'amour*, or Courts of Love, which were supposed to have been held, in all solemnity, during the middle ages. This institution, constituted like a court of law, heard nice questions as to conduct

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in love, and gave decisions for one or the other party, decreeing how the lover and his lady should act in all conceivable situations. As a matter of fact, it is extremely doubtful whether such courts were actually held, but they were at least a fanciful institution of the time and are represented in many of the songs. It has been thought by some that the courts were actually convened and that noble ladies and their courtiers came from all over Europe to submit the fruits of their experience and pass upon some such solemn question as: 'Is it between lovers, or between husband and wife, that the greatest affection, the liveliest attachment, exist?'

At all events, the courts of love existed in the songs of the Troubadours. For instance, one complainant brings the following question, presented in the form of a song by a Troubadour:

'A knight was in love with a lady who was already engaged, but she promised him her favor in case she should ever happen to lose the love of him who was then her lover. A short time subsequent to this the lady and her adorer were married. The knight then laid claim to the love of the young bride, who resisted the claim, maintaining that she had not lost the love of him who had become her husband.' The judgment in this case was supposed to have been passed by Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine, who was later to become the wife of Henry II of England. She refers to a previous judgment, which is regarded as having all the force of a precedent in law, and says: 'We venture not to contradict the decree of the Countess of Champagne, who, by a solemn judgment, has pronounced that true love cannot exist between a married couple. We therefore approve that the lady in question bestow the love which she has promised.'

## THE TROUBADOURS AND TROUVÈRES

### III

Germany, at this time, was hardly behind France in civilization and refinement of manners. It was natural, then, that the courtly song should find its way into Germany. In South Germany—Bavaria and Swabia—the indigenous folk-song continued to dominate. But in the northern provinces the influence of the Trouvères was strongly felt by way of Flanders and the Lower Rhine. The noble singers here called themselves *Minnesinger*—or ‘Singers of Love.’ Their songs are almost as pure and refined in artistic structure as those of Provence, but their subject matter is more earnest and scholarly. In place of the fanciful courtly compliments paid by the southern French singers to their ladies, we find that deep and sincere reverence for womanhood which Tacitus noted among the German barbarians and which continued through the centuries.

The lyrical songs of the Minnesingers were divided into three classes: the Lied, or song; the Lerch, or lay; and the Spruch, or proverb. The difference, musically, was mainly a matter of form, rigid laws governing the formation of the strophes. The Lied was the mostly purely lyrical of the three. The Lerch was more general in subject-matter, partaking sometimes of the narrative. The Spruch was essentially one of the German proverbs which so richly fill the language even to this day, but it was usually developed to make a somewhat lengthy stanza. The central idea of the proverb, its simile or its ethical substance, would be repeated and enlarged upon, becoming lyrical in character though retaining the idiomatic directness and simplicity of the original. Thus the Minnesong tended to keep a homely character which the Provençal lay never had.

Among the famous Minnesingers (who were also



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poets in the modern sense) were Wolfram von Eschenbach and Walther von der Vogelweide. Both are familiar to all lovers of Wagner. The former is one of the chief characters in the opera *Tannhäuser*. He appears as the pure lover of Elizabeth, in contrast to Tannhäuser, whose sensual and pagan character is shown by his affair with the unholy goddess Venus. In the second act of the opera is shown one of the tournaments of song which were characteristic of the age. Tannhäuser, Wolfram, and others, sing the praises of love, each revealing his personal character in the attitude he takes toward the great passion. Wolfram is the genuine Minnesinger, idealizing the object of his devotion, insisting upon her divinity (her likeness to the Virgin Mary), and upon the fleshless, unsensual nature of love in its true estate. One gathers, also, from a hearing of the opera, that he was a typical Minnesinger in that his song was something of a bore. Certainly the Minnesongs, in their ambling lengthiness, would bring sleepiness to a modern audience. But Wolfram, we must remember, was not only a courtly minstrel, but a great epic poet, one of the great figures in German literature.

Walther von der Vogelweide, perhaps the most inspired lyricist of his time, figures by name in *Die Meistersinger*. Walther, the hero, candidate for the degree of Meistersinger, is asked who taught him his art. He replies that he learned it from Walther von der Vogelweide and from the birds. This causes the Mastersingers to shake their heads, for inspiration has little part in their formal music.

The last of the Minnesingers, and one of the most famous, was Heinrich von Meissen, called Frauenlob — 'Praisers of Women.' His songs were so ardent in their idealization of womanhood that it is related how the women of Mayence, when the singer died, bore him

## THE MINNESANG

to his grave and poured over it, mingled with their tears, the richest of Rhenish wines.

Not a few of the songs of the Troubadours, Trouvères, and Minnesingers have been preserved to us and have been deciphered with great care by students. It seems certain that the decipherings are in the main correct. The songs are well worthy of study. Naumann, in his 'History of Music,' gives four harmonized according to modern principles. Unlike any of the church music of the time, these songs are in the modern major scale. They are, probably, the earliest melodies preserved to us which seem to have an affinity with modern music. All music preceding them, as all the church music following them for at least two centuries, sounds strange to our ears; we cannot grasp it, much less enjoy it, without making a conscious allowance for its seemingly outlandish construction. But the songs of the courtly minstrels might almost have been written by Schumann or Brahms. It is possible, of course, that they have been somewhat modernized in transcription. But the fact remains that they are predominantly in the modern major scale and that their turns of phrase show a feeling for melody as such in a way never revealed by the church composers until after Palestrina's time.

The loveliness of these songs grows on one. We must, perhaps, make a preliminary allowance for the length of their lines and for a certain aimlessness which seems to reside in the melody. The musicians of the time did not feel accent and metre so strongly as we do and the regular sing-song of contrasting lines (which sometimes mars modern lyrics) was hardly felt in their songs. They flow lightly and smoothly; their phrases are distinguished by a pause rather than by a system of balancing and contrasting. They must be delivered with the utmost repose, in transparent flowing tones that never betray the breath behind them.

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There must be hardly any accentuation and very slight use of dynamics. Artistic construction, in the more rigid modern sense, is not to be found in them; they have no 'climax point,' obviously prepared, with passages leading 'up to' and 'down from' it. They are rather like the softest breeze in the morning of a sunny summer day. They breathe the spirit of the following lovely verses by Walther von der Vogelweide:

'Love is neither man nor woman,  
Soul it hath not, nor yet body,  
And no earthly sign or token;  
Though the tongue of man hath named it,  
Never mortal eye hath seen it.  
Yet without it can no creature  
Win Heaven's pitying grace and favor;  
Nor where love is will there linger  
Aught of fraud or baseness ever;  
To the traitor, the false-hearted,  
Love hath come not, cometh never.'

But a profound change was coming over society, which wiped out all vestiges of chivalric song. The complete failure of the Crusades was one of the obvious blows dealt the institution of Chivalry. The religious upheavals against the dominance of the church of Rome—those of the Hussites in Bohemia, in the fifteenth century; of the Lutherans in Germany and of the English under Henry VIII in the sixteenth—these, apart from their religious aspect, denoted a spirited rising of the populace to self-consciousness and concerted action. The spread of knowledge and intellectual curiosity established lines of communication all over Europe and diminished the importance of the courts as centres of culture. With this came a growth of manufacture and commerce which raised to importance people very different from the gentle Minnesingers. In the Germany of the sixteenth century the

## THE MEISTERSANG

mercantile middle class came to be of social importance, and around them grew up a new art of song.

### IV

The era of the middle-class or Burgher dominance in the German cities is represented, in music, by the institution of the *Meistersang* (master song). The Meistersang was the middle-class replica of the Minnesang. It arose shortly after the natural death of the Minnesang, early in the fourteenth century, originating, strangely enough, at Mayence, where Heinrich Frauenlob, the last of the great Minnesingers, died. The Minnesang, in fact, provided most of the forms and ideals for the Mastersong—at least in the beginning. But the era of isolated castles and wandering minstrels was not that of mercantile Germany, with strongly walled and independent cities, serving as stopping places for immense caravans coming from Italy and the far east. For these cities the merchant and artisan class held the purse-strings. They were the urban aristocrats. The Muses had perforce to eat from their hands.

The Burghers, being not only shrewd and practical, but prevented by business reasons from wandering the earth in search of fair ladies, organized their music in very formal fashion. They held regular singing contests at which aspiring musicians were heard and criticized. When these aspirants had proved their ability both to compose and to sing to the satisfaction of their elders they were admitted as Mastersingers. But the examination was rigid and the organization or guild of the Mastersingers was jealous. Inasmuch as it controlled the acceptance or rejection of candidates, it could set the rules. And, being thus constantly called upon to exercise its superiority, it tended to solidify its artistic principles into set rules of the most rigid char-

## THE VOICE AND VOCAL MUSIC

acter. The verses of each type of song must be organized in a set way. The music had to be made in accordance with the accepted practice. Certain transitions and ornaments were prohibited—not only regarded as less desirable than others, but ruled out under all circumstances. At the trials, which were usually held in the churches, the candidate's song was judged by from one to four judges, called Markers, who were concealed from his view by a curtain. The judgment was delivered not according to the *beauty* of the song, but strictly according to the number of mistakes the singer had made, with reference to the rules of the guild. It is hardly to be wondered at, then, that the songs of the Meistersingers were dry and uninspired. To musical learning they may have contributed something. But to the art of music, on its poetical side, they gave next to nothing. They show, however, a certain clumsy fancy, as in the titles of the following songs: 'Maidenly Grace,' 'The Nightingale,' 'The Glutton,' 'A Monkey Tune,' and 'The Pointed Arrow.'

The institution of the Mastersong, beginning in Mayence in the fourteenth century, spread over the greater part of Germany, as far as the Baltic Sea, and flourished for nearly four centuries. One guild was in existence at Ulm as late as 1839. The most famous of all the guilds is of course that of Nuremberg, one of the richest German cities of late mediæval times. And the most famous of the Mastersingers is the Nuremberg poet, Hans Sachs, '*Schumacher und Poet dazu.*' Sachs, like Wolfram von Eschenbach, is a landmark in German literature. His output of vigorous homely poems was enormous, and the support he gave to the Lutheran Reformation in its early days contributed in no small measure to its propagation among the simple people.

But though the mastersong was musically sterile, the German folk-song, which had been vigorously de-

## THE LUTHERAN REVIVAL

veloping through the centuries, now came to brilliant flower. The Lutheran Reformation was, as we have said, a popular movement. Without the hearty support and understanding of the masses it could never have succeeded. And Luther, understanding this, sought to draw the congregation as closely as possible into the church service. His chief means were the reading of the Bible and the liturgy in the native tongue instead of Latin, and the congregational singing of chorales. Hymns, as they are sung now in Protestant churches, were almost unknown in the Roman church. Their introduction was a complete innovation of the Lutheran movement. But Luther understood that congregational hymns could not be imported from another country and engrafted on his people. So he took the folk-songs that were actually being sung by the people and wrote devotional words to fit them. He caused many other tunes to be written in the folk-manner and in all probability wrote some himself (including the famous 'Luther's Hymn,' 'A Mighty Fortress is our God'). These hymns spoke with a familiar voice of the people and were one of the powerful sources of strength to the church in its early days of persecution.

The purely musical results of this introduction of folk-song into the church service were very great. From Luther's time onward the chorale—profound, dignified, and solemn—was the spiritual basis of German music. By it German music became emancipated from the Italian. The German church mothered its own musicians, greatest of whom was Johann Sebastian Bach. And the German chorale was one of the two great influences on later German song. From the 'Spiritual Songs' of Johann Sebastian Bach, which are nothing more than solo chorales, through the songs of the same name composed by his son, Carl Philipp Emanuel, to the direct precursors of Schubert, we see

## THE VOICE AND VOCAL MUSIC

a direct line of succession. If the German music preceding Schubert was serious, closely knit, firmly based, we must lay it in large part to the influence of the German folk-song which had the same German qualities—and especially those of simplicity and honesty.

It was not solely in German Protestant music, however, that popular song became merged. Much earlier than this time it had exerted its influence on the music of the Roman church. As early as the fourteenth century it had become the fashion among church composers to use popular tunes for their masses. It is hardly probable that the motive was to draw the people closer into the church service by giving them a tune they were familiar with. In fact, the church had several times been obliged to rule that the people should not sing in the service, except on certain days, before and after the ritual. But the church composers of the thirteenth century and after were in the habit of writing florid counterpoint around a set melody, called the *cantus firmus*, and it became the fashion not to invent the *cantus firmus* for one's self but to borrow it from any source at hand. In the course of time composers hit upon the scheme of borrowing secular tunes. Dufay, at the beginning of the fifteenth century, used one of the tunes of the people, *L'homme armé*, which has been called 'the most popular tune of the Middle Ages.' Such a universal favorite did it become that it was used in masses by nearly every church composer from Josquin de Près to Orlando di Lasso.

### V

It is quite possible that the presence of popular tunes in church music did something to aid the approach of the modern major modes (which had already been widely used by the Troubadours and Minnesingers). But their influence was at first disguised,

## POLYPHONIC ECLIPSE OF SONG

for the *cantus firmus* was usually sung very slowly, in order to allow the florid counterpoint to grow around it, and hence usually became indistinguishable to the hearer. Certainly here the popular art had no such direct and inspiring effect as in the Lutheran revival. Forces were working slowly toward a great change in men's art, as in men's life and thoughts. Popular art underwent an eclipse for a time, to emerge later in a new world, dominant and victorious.

The eclipse came on slowly,—a general twilight all along the line of battle. Beginning with the twelfth (even the eleventh) century, men had been experimenting with counterpoint and polyphony, working out Chinese puzzles in the combination of two and more voices. Gradually they learned how to make these puzzles beautiful as well as ingenious. Then came the age of the great Catholic church composers, of whom Orlando di Lasso and Palestrina are the most famous. With them melody no longer had its former place. There was much more to think of than the beauty of a single voice. The whole art was more austere and more ethereal than popular songs had been.

And the polyphonic art began to dominate secular music. In place of the fluent melody of the Minnesinger came the part-song and madrigal. This was built on the same principles as the sacred mass, but its character was naturally lighter and more lively in movement. The part-song was the 'catch' of Shakespeare's time and its popularity is shown by the frequent reference to it in Shakespeare's plays. In 'Twelfth Night' Sir Andrew, Sir Toby, and the fool commence a catch (doubtless known to the audience): 'Hold thy Peace, Thou Knave,' Sir Andrew expostulating, 'How can I begin if I hold my peace?' The madrigals were not always of so sportive a character. Sometimes they were love-songs or songs of nature, showing keen poetic feeling. Often they were masterpieces



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of polyphony and canon. But though much learning went into their construction, their spirit was that of the popular song. The most interesting of early part-songs is one known as 'Sumer is icumen in,' a Northumbrian canon for six voices, which has been proved to have been composed not later than 1228. It is a delightfully melodious piece, written in fairly good harmony, in the major mode, typical of the freedom and gracefulness of popular music of the time in contrast to the rigor of the ecclesiastical works. From the early part of the thirteenth century to the middle of the seventeenth madrigals were written and were the principal form of secular vocal music.

During this time, of course, folk-song continued. But it was, as it had been several centuries earlier, but a poor relation of music, dwelling among the despised and rejected of men. It was doubtless during this period that the earlier specimens of the folk-songs now preserved to us assumed something like their present form. But so far as outward history is concerned secular song is contained in the madrigal (which is not 'song' in our sense), and in the mastersong of Germany, which was almost wholly lacking in inspiration. When the homophonic song once more awoke to its place, the world had experienced the profound changes of the Renaissance and the Reformation. Secular life had outstripped the religious in variety and intellectual interest. The church was powerful still, but it was no longer the centre of gravity for all men's activity. So song found itself drawn into the vortex and forced to serve men's pleasures and vanities in innumerable forms. What these forms were and how they tended to the Song proper we shall see in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE CLASSIC SONG AND THE ARIA

Italy and the monodic style—Song in the seventeenth century; Germany; France—Song in England—The aria—German song in the eighteenth century; French song in the eighteenth century; forerunners of Schubert.

#### I

THE last half of the fifteenth century was a period of unrest and profound change in music. As we have seen,\* it was in this period that the old pure style of church music reached its highest perfection under Palestrina, and, because the resources of the style had been exhausted, began to give place to the style which we know as modern. Out of this change grew directly most of the modern musical forms—the opera, the oratorio, the independent orchestral piece with its searching out of instrumental resources, and—the Art-Song.

It is one of the vagaries of history that the Art-Song, though it commenced with definite consciousness about the year 1600, did not become a firmly established art form for full two centuries. By all the signs of the times it seems as though it should quickly have risen to maturity. The humanistic enthusiasm of the Renaissance had sensitized people to individual emotions and moods—the very material of the art-song. Singing was universal and had attained a high degree of technical excellence. And the earliest composers of opera of the time had hit upon the very principles which Schubert exemplified two centuries later—the accurate following of the words by expressive music,

\* Vol. I, Chapter IX (p. 258 ff.).

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independent of 'pattern' form. But for various reasons, which we shall examine presently, the art-song became side-tracked. Within twenty years of its birth it had been exiled to a dark cellar of history and its feeble attempts at growth had been smothered by an institution which presently captured the whole civilized world—the opera.

So the history of song from 1600 to 1800 is not unlike that of the five centuries preceding—a delving into the out-of-the-way places where there is to be found much that is charming and interesting, but little with broad and conscious artistic drive. Nevertheless, song in this period does show organic development. The outcast infant in the cellar does grow and become beautiful. But its growth is that of music in general. As technical materials and artistic consciousness develop, song partakes of the common benefits, but only secondarily, here and there, as the servant picks crumbs from the master's table.

First of all, in common with music in general, song partook of the change from the old modes to the major and minor scales. And here, indeed, it was a leader rather than a follower. We have seen in the previous chapter how the folk-songs of Provence and of the Rhine blossomed into a gentle and flowing major mode centuries before the ecclesiastical music had achieved anything like a feeling for the tonic. And it was perhaps partly because of the introduction of folk-tunes into church music that the latter presently began to show evidences of the change. In all countries we can see how the folk-song, increasing its hold over conscious composers, began to set the spirit for all secular music.

In Italy, where the change from the old style to the new was most marked and dramatic, the art-song grew gradually out of the madrigal and part-song. While we have no traces of the folk-song of the sixteenth cen-

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**Pauline Viardot-Garcia  
Adelina Patti**

**Wilhelmine Schröder-Devrient  
Jenny Lind**







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tury, we know that composers began to write their part-songs in the folk-spirit. This meant, besides the predominance of the major mode and the tonic feeling, a stressing of the upper or 'melody' voice, whereas in the older contrapuntal music it was the tenor which carried the chief tune. The *frottolle* of the time were ballads popular both in words and melody; the *villanelle*, or 'village songs,' sought to preserve an artless and rustic flavor; and the *villotte*, or drinking songs, were filled with the high spirits for which the Italians are famous. All these were essentially folk-like melodies treated contrapuntally. Gradually the counterpoint became simpler, reflecting perhaps the growing simplification of church music, and with Perissone Cambio, in 1547, the part-songs assumed the nature of melodies harmonized in four parts with a free use of passing notes—much as in the four-part chorales of J. S. Bach. The simplification continued, and with Giacomo Gastoldi, in 1591, we have true 'chord-for-note' harmonizations of melodies in the modern style. With this, the song element has been liberated. The melody has gained complete mastery, and the harmony is used simply to enrich and support the upper part.

And as we have seen in another chapter \* singers quickly seized the import of the new developments. As early as 1539 Sileno is recorded to have sung the upper part of a madrigal, with wind instruments for the lower voices. Of course these madrigals were still essentially polyphonic, but the composers of the time steadily continued to stress the upper voice for its melodic value and to simplify and suppress the inner voices until they became a mere harmonic support. It was this 'one-voiced madrigal' which became the parent of the *airs du cour* and the simple solo songs and romances of seventeenth century France.

But the abortive development of the art-song was

\* Chapter II (Sec. IV).



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an entirely different matter. It had little or nothing to do with the tendency to stress a madrigal melody, or with the liberation of the seventeenth-century romance. The style called monody, or the *stile rappresentativo*, which might have produced a true art-song in the seventeenth century, was invented or revived quite in opposition to the madrigal and its spirit. The one thing it had in common with the new madrigal was the 'chord-for-note' harmonic style. This, thanks to the popularity of the new madrigal, had become common property. When the Florentine innovators began their experiments, they found it ready to hand. But the true monodic style was, so far as song is concerned, a wholly abortive affair. Its history has been traced elsewhere.\* We know of the painful efforts toward monody for nearly two centuries previous to the Florentine experiments; we know of the solo songs of Vincenzo Galilei in the last decade of the sixteenth century, and of the songs in Giulio Caccini's *Nuovo Musiche*, published in 1600. We dimly feel that a musical style devoted to the conscientious reproduction of the spirit of the words, detail for detail, should have resulted in a vigorous tradition of art-song. And yet we see the whole force of monody veering into the opera, quickly being caught up in the *da capo* aria form, and in an unbelievably short time forgetting all about its early ideals of textual fidelity and serving only as an exposition gallery for vocal virtuosity. Within a quarter of a century monody had forsaken one ideal for its polar opposite. The true 'representative style' had been left high and dry. It remained neglected and forgotten until Beethoven wrote *An die ferne Geliebte*, or Schubert his *Gretchen am Spinnrad*.

Why was this? How could an art-form, which had caught the very essence of the modern song, thus sell

\* Vol. I, Chapter IX.

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its birthright for a mess of pottage? Reason enough. The mess of pottage was very attractive. For the monodic experiments of the Florentines were the playthings of a set of dilettantes. They were artificial and exotic. They had consciously no use for the true musical tradition, the folk-song, which was living and throbbing among the people. The body was there but the soul was missing. The Florentines were chiefly interested in decorating the lives of the aristocracy, in arranging court masques and private theatricals. Aristocracy is always weak when it exists in opposition to and at the expense of the life of the people, as it did in the decadence of Renaissance Italy. The art which such an aristocracy produces may be brilliant, but it is empty. It tinkles and it clatters, but it does not resound. For the isolated aristocrat is not interested in humanity, but in his own glorification. The joys and sorrows of the people are repulsive to him: he seeks to escape sorrows, and he longs for some more highly colored joys. He floats on the surface of life as he floats on the surface of society. His art tends to become the maximum of show and the minimum of meaning.

So when the aristocracy of the time discovered the new monodic style, it sought to make use of it for theatrical entertainment, neglecting the more human and personal song. Vocal coloratura provided aristocracy with precisely the thing it had unconsciously been seeking—the maximum of show and the minimum of meaning. The skilled singers of the time caught the trick of introducing impromptu embellishments on the simple monodic recitative. Monteverdi hit upon the device which would give such coloratura singing a centre of gravity—the *da capo* form. Monody as heightened speech was wholly forgotten, except for the debased *recitativo secco*, which bridged the gaps between arias, and tinsel opera became the furore of the leisured

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class. The middle class of Italy, becoming prosperous in business and always anxious to ape its betters, flocked to these entertainments as soon as large opera houses began to spring up, and opera as an institution overshadowed all other musical forms. The oratorio, presumably devotional in spirit, became no less debased in its display. Song, as a great art-form, was strangled for another century or two, receiving no new ideals and serving as a mere diversion for composer and singer. Thus does the easy convenience of abstract form often stifle poetic expression.

We have spoken of the *da capo* form and its unfortunate influence on the monodic style. Strictly speaking, the term *da capo* was not used until Tenaglia used it in his opera *Cleano*, in 1661. But the ordinary statement that the *da capo* was invented by Tenaglia (or by Alessandro Scarlatti, as is more frequently said) is quite misleading. Tenaglia's *da capo* aria is of little historical importance. The composer used the term probably not out of a sense of form, but out of pure laziness, preferring not to copy out the opening section a second time. The real *da capo*, which in its more developed state becomes the sonata form, can be traced back vaguely into primitive music, and exists in miniature perfection in many folk-songs. It becomes a recognized mold for musical composition about the time of Monteverdi. With the later opera and oratorio composers we find it in a debased state, where it exists not as an artistic form but as a mere stenographic convenience.

This debasement is typical of the cheapening of opera which continued pretty steadily up to the time of Gluck. The coloratura aria obscured to all minds the expressive possibilities of the *stile rappresentativo*, and left to song nothing but the old madrigal tradition fused with certain elements of popular feeling. The many arias, ariettas, *canzoni*, *cantate*, and even one-

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voiced madrigals, which were published by the fashionable composers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries showed little regard for dramatic or precise emotional expression, but continued to sing with the placid lyrical feeling of the great madrigal age. They were only obliged, with the growth of solo singing, to become clearer as to form, more regular in metre and line. For their ability to achieve this they had the popular song almost wholly to thank. Scarlatti's beautiful *canzonetta*, *O cessate di piagarmi*, with its simple guitar accompaniment, might pass for a Neapolitan folk-song of to-day. Yet, on the whole, the solo songs of this period failed to fulfill the high artistic promise of the early seventeenth century.

There was a great quantity of these lyrical pieces, however, and they gained a high popularity. For the most part they remain to-day in their original state, published with the curious notation and the archaic clefs of the time, unknown except to the savants. But certain anthologies have presented a few of the songs to the general public, and these have astonished hearers with their strange placid beauty. In some ways it is the best genius of the time which we find in these songs. In them the lyric impulse of the Italians came out in its purest form. The flashy ideals of the opera house were far removed from their tender strains. Their beauty is like the sunlight of an early spring morning, which illumines all things and exaggerates none. The words, though naïve and somewhat conventional in their continual playing with sentimental love, are not without their grace and beauty. And the music is remarkably varied. Among these songs we find lullabies, fanciful dialogues, dance songs, gentle laments, and delightful musical jokes. There is among them much less of pure convention than in the operas of the period, and at times there is a sensuous or emotional quality which seems to look forward many decades. To the

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singer these songs are especially valuable, since they represent at its purest the old Italian ideal of *bel canto*, free from either declamatory or coloratura influence. There can be no better school for the formation of purity of tone and fluency of phrasing than these early *canzoni*.

Their general character, as contrasted with that of modern music, is strikingly illustrated in Strauss's opera *Der Rosenkavalier*. In the first act of this work the court musician sings a few strophes of a song which is supposed to be of the period of the opera, and the composer has deftly imitated the music of the time. The song shows no touch of emotional agitation or harshness. It has no climaxes, scarcely any variations of tonal power. It is merely a lovely melody, sung purely and smoothly, somewhat aimless in melodic formation, in long fluent phrases and gentle melancholy cadences. To hear this *canzone*, contrasted with the agitated modern music which surrounds it in the opera, will demonstrate most eloquently the spiritual difference between the music of the seventeenth and that of the twentieth century.

The song composers of this period are those whose names we meet in the history of opera and oratorio, for it continued to be the part of every popular composer in the larger forms to maintain and broaden his reputation by means of small and popular pieces. Further, some of the best of the songs are taken from the larger works. Not all the arias were of the coloratura type. Often, especially in the seventeenth century, charming *canzoni* and ariosos found their way into a long choral or stage work. The harmonic support (in many cases supplied by the modern editors from the original figured bass) is at the beginning simple and somewhat angular. But as the seventeenth century wears on we find Monteverdi's great discovery of the unprepared dissonance working more freely into the

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texture of the accompaniment. The lower voices of the accompaniment become more connected and song-like as the *rappresentativo* feeling gives way to the lyrical. And long before the end of the century the simpler vocal numbers begin to look very much like those of the early Handel operas. With Alessandro Scarlatti, working at the end of the century, the change from the madrigal style of Palestrina's time is complete. In place of pure, motionless triads and solid, block-like architecture, we have the movement and flow of song in all the parts. Music becomes sharply differentiated in character by the nature of the emotion or feeling it is intended to express. What we miss, judging by modern standards, is a definite rise and fall of the feeling. The phrases seem too long, too little differentiated. There is no definite climax-point in the whole. There is too much linked sweetness. But this is precisely the virtue of the songs. They are the canonization of *bel canto*. They seek before all else perfect purity of tone and style.

From the Monteverdi operas, much talked-of but little known, we should mention the famous arioso from *Arianna*, the so-called 'Ariadne's Lament.' In all the Italian music of the time no more poignant emotional utterance can be found. In its freedom and directness, it seems to be a foreshadowing of the opera of the late nineteenth century. But as the line of opera composers continues the pure *bel canto* ideal gains the upper hand. This we find represented in the one-voiced madrigals of Monteverdi's contemporaries, as, for example, in the charming *Amarilli* of Caccini. Cavalli, who continued the operatic tradition of Monteverdi and gave greater freedom to the aria, gives us a type of song which contains many elements of the popular. Carissimi, first writer of oratorios and founder of the great Italian coloratura tradition, writes more brilliantly. One of the best known songs of the time is his *Vit-*

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*toria*,\* which has an irresistible verve and energy. Marco Antonio Cesti, follower and disciple of Carissimi, was by nature more of a lyricist. His style is wonderfully suave and melodious, often appealing in a striking way to the sentiments and the senses. Though he was primarily a religious composer, his many madrigals and secular ariettas bring to us the sunny sensuousness of the south. Many more of the popular composers of the time are all but unknown to us.

Antonio Caldara (1671-1763), a *maestro di capella* in Mantua and Vienna, wrote secular songs, of which one, *Come raggio di sol*,\* has preserved his fame. This, with its fine *sostenuto* melody over a throbbing accompaniment of repeated chords, carries eloquently a delicate rise and fall of feeling which seems to be of the age of Schubert. A certain G. B. Fasolo, whose dates are not even known, has left us a charming song of sentiment, *Cangia, cangia tue voglie*, which in its delicacy of workmanship suggests the French songs of the eighteenth century. Giovanni Battista Bassani (1657-1716), *maestro di cappella* at Bologna and Ferrara, left a number of love-songs of exquisite grace and tenderness, of which the lullaby, *Posate, dormite*, will serve as an example. Other song-writers, most of them more or less known for their work in the larger forms, were Antonio Vivaldi, Alessandro Stradella, Francesco P. Sacrati, Paolo Magni, Jacopo Perti, Antonio Lotti, Niccola Jomelli, Domenico Sarri, Raffaello Rontani, Benedetto Marcello, Pier Domenico Paradies, Francesco Gasparini, Andrea Falconiere, Francesco Durante, G. B. Bononcini, Arcangelo del Leuto, and S. de Luca. Some of these men are no more than names in musical history, who are known at all only because some dusty manuscript preserved their fame. For some the primary biographical facts are missing.

\* See Musical Examples (Vol. XIII).

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Others, of course, were men of wide influence, who have made a place for themselves in musical history. But the excellence of the work of the obscure men reveals to us how widespread was the art of musical composition at the time, how excellent the tradition that was rooted in the whole nation.

Easily the greatest song-writer of the period was the distinguished opera composer, Alessandro Scarlatti. He was a notable innovator in many forms, and this power of origination is shown in the poetic variety he has given to his songs. We have already mentioned his folk-like song, *O cessate di piagarmi*, which combines with the grace of the dance the sweetness which invites to tears. In a quite different vein nothing could be finer than *Su, venite a consiglio*, in which the author holds a dialogue with his Fancies—a smoothly-moving allegro of the utmost delicacy. Scarlatti's emotional style is represented in the arietta, *Sento nel core*, and as a pupil of the worldly Carissimi he can, of course, show numberless arias in the brilliant bravura style which was so popular at the time.

Pergolesi, the brilliant composer of *opera buffa*, whose early death robbed music of one of its most promising votaries, is known to singers everywhere by his song *Tre giorni*. The purest Italian lyricism also flows in his andantino song, *Se tu m'ami, se sospiri*. Coming down to a later date we find the extremely popular song-writer and composer of *opera buffa*, Giovanni Paesiello (1741-1816), whose arietta, *Caro mio ben*, is one of the purest examples of *cantilena* in all music. We may also notice the delicate gypsy song, *Chi vuol la Zingarella*. In Paesiello we find all the traditional Italian virtues in the highest degree—simplicity, grace, expressiveness—together with a sympathetic understanding of the voice which has rarely been surpassed in Italian song-writing.



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### II

One thing, however, the 'representative style' had contributed to song, in common with all other forms of seventeenth century music. This was the unprepared dissonance in harmonic writing. The dissonance, which gave immensely greater freedom to the leading of voices, provided especially a means of poignant emotional expression, wholly lacking in the old church music. And such art-songs as were written in the seventeenth century made a limited use of the dissonance, particularly the dominant seventh, which enabled it to keep mildly abreast of musical progress.

In Germany, in the early part of this century, Hans Leo Hassler (1564-1612) was the chief exponent of song. Hassler had studied in Italy and brought back to his native land something of the Latin lightness of touch, as well as the technical innovations which he had seen in process of development during his student days. At his hands the heavy and earnest German folk-song became lighter and the melody more prominent, especially in his dance songs. About this time many song collections made their appearance, testifying to the growing popularity of solo song. But it was Heinrich Albert (1604-1651) who gave the true national touch to German song and justified the title which later generations have given him, 'Father of the German Lied.' Germany, in the early part of the seventeenth century, was suffering from the effects of severe religious wars and was in one of its periodic states of national and cultural depression. Placed as it was in the centre of enemies, disrupted in political adherence and torn by fratricidal quarrels, it was peculiarly liable to lose its indigenous culture and to adopt its manners and art from surrounding nations. This was its estate in the first half of the seventeenth

## GERMAN SONG IN SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

century, when the 'poet patriots' sought to revive national spirit in poetry. The group had much in common with that of more than a century later \* which sought the same renaissance of German national life, but the time was not yet ripe for their full success. Germany was disrupted spiritually as well as politically and for still another century French letters and art dominated the upper classes. But beneath the superficial culture of the aristocracy there was the true national life of the common people, the force which has kept Germany one through darkest days and nights and has in the last fifty years brought to fruition such a glorious era of national culture. And it was to the folk-element in German culture that the 'poet patriots' were forced to appeal. Heinrich Albert, in setting to music the poems of this group, chose the German folk-song style, rather than that of the Italian aria. By this choice he made his work count for something in history. He may be called (at least so far as Germany is concerned) the creator of the *volkstümliches Lied*. This is the song which we meet with continually in the next century and a half—the song which is composed consciously and with a definite artistic effect in mind, but with the materials which are common to the people and capable of being understood by all. The 'folk-like' song, in fact, becomes a goodly share of the folk-song treasury of the succeeding generation. At its best it is little below true folk-song in quality. Often it fills a whole gap in the life of the people which true folk-song had neglected to fill. We may get a very fair estimate of the place of Heinrich Albert's *volkstümliches Lied* in the life of the people if we recall the work of Stephen Foster in America,—a work which is now the common property of people from one end of the land to the other.

But, as we have said, German national life was not

\* See Vol. II, Chapter VI.

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vigorous in the seventeenth century, and the work of the 'poet patriots' passed into comparative oblivion. Italian opera quickly became established in all the court centres of Germany, and its ideals, nurtured especially by Reinhard Keiser in Hamburg, dominated the conscious musical life of the nation. French refinement entered in, to the detriment of indigenous art. The songs of the time, written by J. G. Graun (1698-1771), G. P. Telemann (1681-1767), Agricola, and others, were called odes and arias, imitating the French and Italian names as they imitated the French and Italian forms, and the *volkstümliches Lied* as well as the true art-song was again in disrepute. We should mention, however, the few secular songs of J. S. Bach, which reveal, in spite of their lack of originality in form, a delicate poetic sense, especially in the little love-song, *Bist du bei mir*. For the true art-song Germany had to wait until it had achieved some amalgamation of the social and cultural life of the nation.

Much the most grateful song literature of the long transition period is to be found in France. There, Gallic taste restrained opera from the worst excesses of the Italian school, while the French sense of grace and proportion produced a multitude of trifles which have by no means lost their charm to this day. Moreover, as the eighteenth century wore to a close there arose a wonderful tradition of patriotic and idealistic songs which outshone the similar songs of Germany in brilliance if not, on the whole, in stark emotional power.

At the end of the sixteenth century the folk-songs of France, like those of England, were still largely in the modal scales. But this was not in imitation of ecclesiastical music. Folk-songs have borrowed very little from church music, in any age, while the debt on the other side is enormous. The modal character of the early folk-songs is proper to them and extends

## FRENCH SONG IN SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

back far into the early morning of music. If church and folk-music were similar in their scales, it is rather because they arose from a common stock. Certainly the songs of early France were thoroughly of their own and not of any borrowed character. But the universal trend toward a standard major scale and a tonic centre was felt in France as in other countries, and by the end of the sixteenth century was well developed. The folk-tunes of the time were vigorous in the extreme, probably as little like the dainty and restrained songs of modern France as the stolid songs of nineteenth century England were like the Elizabethan songs, with their abounding energy. The Lutheran movement in music, which adapted folk-tunes as settings to devotional hymns, found an exact parallel in France as early as 1539, when Marot translated the psalms into metrical form in the vulgar tongue and set them to the songs of the street. The settings instantly became popular. It is said that the court, being fascinated with the freshness of the songs, became thereby more familiar with scripture than it had been for many a year. The strict church party violently disapproved of the practice and issued its own set of rival songs to stem the tide of popularity, but even these, which were obliged to be popular in character, only added to the vogue of the street-tune settings. In the following century the same thing happened in the political field. The Cardinal Mazarin, who was immensely unpopular among the people, was made the butt of endless satires in verse set to tunes which everybody knew. No fewer than four thousand of these 'Mazarinades' were later collected and published.

The songs of the late sixteenth century, apart from folk-songs, were largely dance tunes set to lively words and supported with a polyphonic accompaniment. But slowly the polyphony became more simple and in the beginning of the seventeenth century the 'chord-for-

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note' accompaniment was adopted from Italy and came to most charming flower. With the French sense of grace and fitness the French composers made their *airs du cour*, or 'court tunes,' lyric and flowing, keeping the accompaniment in its proper place as a mere support to the melody and rounding off the pieces by means of a subtle and satisfying architecture. The many names under which the French aristocratic songs went are hardly to be distinguished with definiteness. The term *airs du cour* covered almost any songs of a restrained, polished character. The *chanson* was nearer the people, sometimes a ballad, very often a dance tune, and not infrequently a gross or indecent piece of little artistic value. The *romance*, which dates from the Troubadours, was touching and graceful, almost wholly confined to the tender sentiments. The *brunette* was a simple love song, not very distinct in genre, the very name being a matter of doubt. The *bergerette*, in which class belong some of the most delightful of French songs, was a lyric of pretended pastoral nature, in which lovers carried on their romances in the guise of shepherds and shepherdesses. The *musette* was written in supposed imitation of a street organ, invariably over a 'drone bass,' usually in fifths. The *vaudeville*, less distinguished in character than any of the others, was a mere adaptation of current street tunes (whence the name, *voix de ville*). These types of song found their way in great abundance into later French opera, especially that admirable achievement of the French, the *opéra comique*, and many of the best French songs of the eighteenth century are to be found in opera scores. But in the operas of Lully, the chief French dramatic composer of the seventeenth century, the lightness of touch which distinguishes the French had not yet come into its own and the somewhat ponderous classic tradition still dominated. Songs during this period were usually written

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independently, but they grew in popularity so steadily that the composers of light opera in the following century were forced to include one or more *romances*, *brunettes*, or *bergerettes* in their works to insure their popularity.

### III

In Elizabethan England in the sixteenth century the strolling minstrels and ballad singers had already largely adopted the Ionian or major mode for their songs. This mode was in high disfavor among the educated musicians of the time, who called it *il modo lascivio*, the 'lascivious mode.' It is interesting to recall that the Greeks, including Plato, brought the same charge against their Lydian mode, which was the one of the four original modes which was most predominantly major in its feeling. In the England of Elizabeth and James the madrigal had nearly as much vogue as in Italy and the madrigal writers, chief among whom was Orlando Gibbons (1583-1625), were highly regarded. Not a few of the solo songs from this period have continued in favor to this day, but the more familiar ones were in most cases the work of educated composers writing in the popular style. In fact, the pure English folk-song was so inhospitably received among its own folk during the Commonwealth and after, that, until recently, it was popularly supposed that England had no folk-song of consequence. But the folk-songs were there and have continued from generation to generation through the centuries, to be discovered of late years by conscientious investigators. Though they are dying out in modern industrial England, they still exist in such numbers and of such distinctive beauty that they prove, more than all records can, the genuine musical quality of the England that existed before the great Rebellion. From among the 'folk-like' songs of this

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period we have, preserved in full popularity, a number, notably the 'Carman's Whistle,' 'The British Grenadiers,' 'The Bailiff's Daughter of Islington,' the 'Willow' song which Shakespeare introduced into 'Othello,' and 'The Friar of Orders Gray.'

During the Commonwealth secular music flourished, but chiefly on the Royalist side, since the Puritans, in their idle moments, were largely engaged in singing hymn tunes. From this period we have the stirring song 'When the King Enjoys His Own Again.' With the return of the Stuarts and the reign of Charles II the influence of France, where Charles had spent his years of exile, became dominant. The dance, not the dance of the people but the stately dance of the court, asserted its sway over song, and the flesh and blood, which had throbbed so richly in Elizabethan England, all but dropped out of the later English product. The songs which are preserved from the period occurred chiefly in the masques which were performed at court, which were French to the core. The chief song writer of the time, and of that just preceding, was Henry Lawes (1595-1662), who wrote the music to Milton's immortal masque of 'Comus.' Lawes was a true musician, though not a great one, and he did much for English song in making the music respect the poetry. He loosened formal bonds and introduced something of the Italian recitative style. Along with the Restoration we have semi-folk-songs of a light character, though without the freshness of preceding decades. We may mention two of the most popular, 'Come, Lasses and Lads,' and 'Barbara Allen.' Pelham Humphrey (1647-74), whom Charles II sent to France to study under Lully, brought back to England with him the French grace and refinement and helped to set the keynote for English song for the next half century. This much the returned Stuart dynasty did for English music, in bringing French traditions across the

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Channel, but the more stolid English disposition of the time never hospitably absorbed the new influence. And in 1688 the Stuarts were ushered out to the strains of a most remarkable tune, 'Lilliburlero.' Of this song it has truly been said that it 'drove King James II out of England.' It was not a patriotic or warlike song, however, but merely a satire. The ribald words may seem the worst of doggerel to us now, but their rough satire awakened all England when the impudence of the Stuarts had become unbearable and the energetic melody carried them in a flash from one end of the country to the other. The upheaval of 1688 was the 'bloodless revolution.' King James succumbed to laughter.

And, curiously enough, this loose and somewhat commonplace tune introduces us to the greatest and most sincere of all English musicians (unless recent years have produced his peer) and to the song writer of whom, above all others, England has a right to be proud. This man was Henry Purcell. The tune of 'Lilliburlero' was written as an innocent dance in a book of virginal pieces and thence was brought into the open air to support the high spirits of the satiric verses. It is quite certain that Purcell never intended himself to be made immortal when he wrote it, or to be an instrument in the downfall of King James, to whom he wrote one of his many 'odes.' But into some of his other songs he put the best he had. They are graceful in the extreme, often decorated with the vocal turns and embellishments which were the fashion of the day, but never lacking in the musician's touch. Their melodic facility is charming; their appropriateness to the spirit of the words is convincing; and their delicate architecture makes them, apart from their vocal quality, polished works of art. Purcell still frequently (and justly) appears on song programs. Among his many lyrics which are worth knowing we may mention 'Full



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Fathom Five' and 'Come Unto These Yellow Sands,' to Shakespeare's words, and 'I Attempt from Love's Sickness to Fly.'

But after Purcell English music showed a falling off in originality and spontaneous quality which has astonished and mystified historians. And English song suffered the same fate along with the rest of English music. Vigorous semi-folk-songs date from the early eighteenth century—notably 'Down Among the Dead Men,' 'The Vicar of Bray,' and 'Pretty Polly Oliver'—but as the century progressed the song output became more and more vapid and superficial in spirit. This was doubtless in part due to the vogue of Italian opera which held fashionable England fascinated and smothered the creative work of native composers. And as people became disgusted with the fad they turned to the next best thing at hand, the 'ballad opera.' This was not a very exalted form of art, but it was at least fresher and more musical than the exaggerated vocal virtuosity of opera, with its conventionalized arias and its 'castrati,' or male sopranos. The ballad opera came into fashion in 1727, with the enormous success of 'The Beggar's Opera,' a success comparable to that of 'Pinafore' a century and a half later. The ballad opera was strictly not opera at all, but only a lively and merry farce (often suggesting the operetta librettos of Sir William Gilbert) interspersed with songs and duets. These songs were at first but popular melodies of the street or countryside, adapted to new words, assuring the popularity of the opera because the tunes were favorites. As the number of native tunes seemed insufficient to supply the enormous number of ballad operas, the writers engaged well-known musicians to write original tunes in the same manner—sometimes as many as eight or ten composers for one work. The songs never appeared as organic parts of the action and hence offer no analogy to the arias of true opera, but they were

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usually made vaguely appropriate to the dramatic situation and were introduced in such a way as not to seem out of place. Among the host of these melodies which have come down to us there are indeed many which are fresh and attractive. But the great majority have the cheapness of the street without its abundant life. And they nearly always have a strain of the extreme sentimentality which has remained a blot on English song literature until recent times. On the whole, if the ballad operas delivered England from the pompous inanities of the Italian craze, they also seduced English taste from the exquisite manner of Purcell. The better part of musical England turned to the noble oratorios of Handel and against his thundering chords all minor lyric strains were fruitless.

The song writers of eighteenth-century England are a depressing crew. Henry Carey (1685-1743), to whom the melody of 'God Save the King' has been attributed, was a fruitful writer of ballad operas, though he is nowadays best known by 'Sally in Our Alley,' a tune which is the essence of awkwardness—a tune, in short, which could have happened nowhere but in eighteenth-century England. Thomas Arne (1710-78) was much more of a musician and a scholar, but also much of a pedant. Even such a dainty song as 'Where the Bee Sucks' is marred by its awkward overlaying of *florituri*. The song by which Arne is best known, 'Rule Britannia,' is indeed a stirring melody; but the fact that a man of Arne's standing could write such a tune to the given words and that England could accept the two as belonging together proves to what a depth the country had sunk in musical matters. We need only quote the first line:



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Wagner said that this phrase contained the whole spirit of the English people. But what about the words and that ridiculous 'fir-r-r-r-rst?' Samuel Arnold (1740-1802), Charles Dibdin (1745-1814), James Hook (1746-1827), and John Davy (1764-1824) need only be mentioned and forgotten. Henry Bishop (1788-1855) was a man of more artistic sense and a composer of graceful and emotional melody, but without his operas he would scarcely be remembered. The tradition of awkward and sentimental melody which these men established or maintained continued to disgrace English song until the close of the nineteenth century and even to-day in the half-conscious English popular ballad we seem to hear the debased strains of the ballad opera.

### V

During all this period song, as we have tried to show, was under a cloud. It was the aria, illegitimate child of the *stile rappresentativo* and dearest daughter of sunny Italy, that held sway over the nations. Vocal music was commonly thought in terms of the aria. All else was little better than a diversion for an idle moment—understood, of course, that we are speaking of polite culture. What aria meant to the seventeenth and especially to the early eighteenth century was chiefly vocal display of one sort or another. But formally we may distinguish it by the *da capo* form. *Da capo*, meaning 'from the beginning,' was the open sesame into the mazes of vocalization. Monteverdi must get the credit for it. He lit the fire. Numerous rubbish piled on by other hands furnished the smoke. For Monteverdi was, above and beyond the innovator in him, a skilled and sensitive musician. He felt, and felt truly, that the *stile rappresentativo* made his beloved music decidedly a second best. Very well to reveal the emotional qualities of the text! But if the

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music cannot itself hang together there is something wrong. And it was with one of those very keen and very simple devices that Monteverdi righted matters. 'Represent' your text to your heart's content, he said, but before you have done go back and sing a little of the beginning over again. Thus you give the musician a chance; for you mark off the music as something having its own architecture. And, moreover, you 'represent' all the more truly, for you mark off at the same time the lyrical emotion and make a musical unit of what is properly also a unit of drama. This Monteverdi did in simplest terms in the first of arias—'Ariadne's Lament,' in his opera *Arianna*, and this same Lament, it is recorded, very properly moved the audience to tears. The aria is beautiful still. Monteverdi's dissonances have not lost their emotional expressive value. And the *da capo* repetition, which enters so unobtrusively, underscores the emotion as nothing else could. But Monteverdi was not the inventor of this form. Needless to say the folk-song had been there before him. And, as always happens, when the art of the people had been commandeered for a single well-chosen one of its treasures, it gave gold where silver had been asked.

Nevertheless gold can be put to base uses. Scarcely had dilettantes discovered that the *da capo* form could be used to give unity to some vocalist's singing than they used it to give form to all sorts of formless things. We cannot at this distance imagine the vapidness of endless runs and roulades which passed in the seventeenth century for vocal music. Or at least we cannot until we see the actual fact on a cold printed page. And then, to do the seventeenth century justice, we cannot imagine the brilliancy of these same runs and roulades when brilliantly sung with the incomparable Italian vocal art of the time. Brilliancy of a kind! Let us call it brilliancy merely, and not plague it with the name

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of music. However that may be, we certainly cannot imagine the hold this institution of the aria had over the imaginations of the people of the time. To them it must have seemed the Muses on wings as compared with the Muses on foot. Aria became a science. More, it became a code of honor. Its nuances and conventions were tabulated as nicely as those of fencing or love making. A sin against the code was the unforgivable sin. There were, scientifically accredited, certain classes of arias with certain subdivisions thereunto appertaining. An opera must contain so many of each sort. Each major singer must have so many, no two alike and all equitably distributed. No aria must fall in the same class as that just preceding. There were many rules such as these, and more of the same sort which are well buried in dusty dictionaries. And if there were any to protest against such a condition they were promptly silenced by the statement that the arrangement was excellent for the singers.

Those who studied this deep subject most profoundly at the time agreed that the aria was to be divided into some five classes, to wit: *aria bravura*—brilliant, rapid, difficult; *aria cantabile*—smooth, long drawn out, designed to exhibit purity of tone and manipulation of the breath; *aria buffa*—humorous; *aria di portamento*—simple in outline, playing with the singer's trick of swelling out on long-sustained tones; and *aria parlante*—simulating rapid spoken speech, a type peculiarly grateful to the Italian language. These classes had their subdivisions, as, for instance, the *aria parlante*, which might be *agitata*, or *infuriata*, or *fugata*, or what not. The lore of aria was endless. Except that the form continued into Italian opera of the middle nineteenth century it would scarcely be worth recalling. But the greatest of the arias (with considerable musical value added) are among the latest. The 'Factotum' aria which opens Rossini's 'Barber of Seville' is a per-

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fect example of the *buffa* and might also come under the head of the *parlante*; and Leonora's first aria in *Il Trovatore* is in the true manner of the *bravura*. In addition to the arias proper we should mention the *cavatina* and the *arioso*; the former a short aria, rather more musical and graceful than was considered necessary in the longer forms; and the latter a brief lyrical strain, free as to form, planned truly to express an emotion in its momentary passing. All these forms have little more than an archeological interest to us now (though the *da capo* idea remains one of the most fruitful in all music), except for the purposes of vocal study. But this exception is considerable. The arias were designed to exhibit the utmost of vocal virtuosity. They serve to-day to develop and exercise the same, so far as modern music and musical taste demand it, for the rather more artistic purposes of the twentieth century.

### VI

The 'odes' and 'arias,' which in early eighteenth-century Germany stood in the place of songs, began to give place toward the middle of the century to music of a more national character. The work of Johann Sebastian Bach, though not widely recognized at the time, spoke for a solid tradition of native German singing. And the wars of Frederick the Great, who reigned from 1740 to 1786, did much to arouse patriotism in outward life. Any vigorous cultural life in Germany during these wearing conflicts was, of course, impossible, but after the close of the Seven Years' War (1756-63) Prussia and Saxony began to revive, and with them revived a consciousness of German nationality and German identity. The courts were, of course, thoroughly Parisian, but the middle class was more than ever national in feeling. And among this class in the last third of the century arose a type of dramatic entertainment

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which corresponded to the *opéra comique* in France and was quite as national—the *Singspiel*. The founder of this type was Johann Adam Hiller (1728-1804), first director of the famous Leipzig Gewandhaus orchestra and one of the most noted musicians of his day. The *Singspiel* was not greatly unlike the English ballad opera in form, though much more sincere in spirit. It was a simple play, usually light in character, with frequent interspersing of songs and choruses. The plot was usually drawn from German village life and the characters were all familiar types. These were, on the whole, so truly observed that the *Singspiel* became a truly national art. Moreover, its artistic value was often high; the songs and choruses were usually organic parts of the action, and the best musicianship frequently went into their composition. The *Singspiel* was the direct parent of German opera, as has been narrated in another place.\* But its value to the art of song was even more important. For, while in the *Singspiel* the nobles and aristocratic characters sang arias modelled on the French style, the peasants and middle class people sang true songs in the spirit of folk-music. Accordingly the *Singspiel*, with its immense popularity, spread abroad the knowledge and love of the German *volkstümliches Lied*. It was for more than a quarter of a century the direct continuer of the tradition of German song.

But Hiller's place in the history of song is even more distinctive than this. For he is generally conceded to have been the first composer of the *durchkomponiertes Lied*. *Durchkomponiert*, which literally means 'composed all the way through,' is used to describe that type of song which does not follow any abstract formal scheme but fits the words in all their variations of meaning, leaving each song to find its own form according to its own requirements. Thus the aria form

\* Cf. Vol. II, Chapter X.

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which would require the repetition of the first section at the close of the song would be wholly unsuitable for a poem which showed an emotional development from joy to sorrow, or from sorrow to joy. In the same way the strophic form, which sets each verse of the poem to the same tune, would be unsuitable for a poem expressing contrasting emotions in its verses. A true regard for the spirit of the words required that the song composer should be free to write expressive music according to the requirements of each line of the poem. This was first done, tentatively enough, it is true, by Hiller. From that time on German song writers showed a certain amount of freedom in their song forms. It must be admitted that they did not make much use of their freedom, since they did the greater part and the best part of their work in the strophic form. But Hiller has the credit of originating a type of procedure which was further developed by Beethoven and brought to glorious fruition by Schubert.

Gluck, with his unfailing artistic sense, has supplied a bit of the literature of song development in his letter, written in 1777 to La Harpe, accompanying his settings of some of Klopstock's poems, in which he said that 'the union between air and words should be so close that the poem should seem made for the music no less than the music for the poem.' Unfortunately, however, these 'odes,' the only true songs Gluck wrote, are dry and pedantic. Joseph Haydn, though he contributed nothing to the development of the art-song, has left a few lyric settings that are known and loved to-day. His earlier sets of songs (one group of twelve in 1781 and another in 1784) were so popular in England that he was besieged by the publishers with requests to write more. The result was the twelve famous 'canzonets,' of which the best known are the 'Mermaid's Song' and 'My Mother Bids Me Bind My Hair.'\* The

\* See Musical Examples (Vol. XIII).



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latter, though still undimmed in musical beauty, is by no means a step in a forward direction. It is written in true aria style and the melody, while appropriate to the spirit of the words, is almost instrumental rather than vocal. The song might, in fact, have served as the allegretto to a symphony.

The other supreme German composer of the time, however, saw to the heart of the *durchkomponiertes Lied* and produced at least one song that wholly anticipated Schubert. Mozart published in all thirty-four songs that can justly be distinguished from arias. Most of them, like 'The Song of Freedom,' are little different from the ordinary strophic songs of the day. But Mozart's setting of Goethe's poem, 'The Violet,' is a miniature masterpiece of the art-song.\* Retaining the delicate sense of architecture which Mozart's work never lost, it still follows the import of the words with faithful accuracy. The violet loved a maiden who came daily to walk in the meadow. It hoped that she would notice it. She never did. But one day she stepped on it and crushed it. And the violet was happy to meet its death through its loved one. The short, gasping phrases on the words *es sank, es starb* ('it sank, it died') are imitated in the accompaniment so suggestively that one might almost call it realism. On the words, '*und sterb ich denn*' ('and though I die') the music becomes quicker with the growing emotion of the dying flower. *So sterb ich doch durch sie!* continues the flower in ecstasy, and on the beloved word, *sie*, the voice attains its highest note and its emotional climax.

## VII

The last half of the eighteenth century in France gave the world some of the loveliest songs of the age. The types continued for a time to be those mentioned above,

\* See Musical Examples (Vol. XIII).

**Mozart's Manuscript of the first page of his setting of  
Goethe's '*Das Veilchen*'**



Allegretto

Der weichen

der weichen

Handwritten musical score for a piece titled "Der weichen der weichen" in Allegretto tempo. The score is written on ten staves. The first staff has a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. The music is written in a cursive, handwritten style. The lyrics are written below the staves. The piece ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

Anhang des Liedes: Das Veilchen



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but the gain in grace and fluency over the preceding century was enormous. *Opéra comique* was filled with *romances* and *brunettes* and *bergerettes*. Not a few songs, also, were composed independently. Among the latter class we should mention those of Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-78), literary adventurer and musical dilettante, who entwined himself so strangely into the whole cultural life of France. Rousseau never had an adequate musical education. He had served as tutor in music in Switzerland and did not improve himself much with his desultory self-education after he came to Paris. But he was a true journalist, and no inadequacy of preparation could daunt him. He had that rare journalistic gift of knowing what people wanted ten years before they themselves knew it. His *opéra comique*, *Le devin du village* (1752), still occasionally played, was the lightest of theatrical entertainments, but continued in unabating popularity for sixty years. Its success played no small part in setting or maintaining the tone of *opéra comique* for the next half century. Its songs were chiefly the romances which were popular in Paris; they showed, perhaps, no great creative ability, but were extraordinary, like all Rousseau's work, in catching a certain popular quality which escapes analysis. The composer's activity as essayist and novelist, which places him as one of the greatest social forces of modern times, prevented his ever doing much work in music and the world is perhaps not much the loser. But in his musical activity he was at least important as a fashion-follower and a fashion-setter. In 1781, after his death, there were published the hundred romances and duets which he called *Les Consolations des misères de ma vie*, containing some of his most typical melodies. Among them is the famous romance on three notes—*Que le jour*—which does not, indeed, escape a sense of melodic poverty from its limited compass, but reveals a delicate grace which makes it worth

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remembering apart from its interest as an experiment.

But far greater than Rousseau in actual musical value are, of course, the great French writers of *opéra comique*, Monsigny (1729-1817), Philidor (1726-95), Dalayrac (1753-1809), and Grétry (1741-1813). In technical learning these men, especially Grétry, were all deficient. But in a certain subtle melodic grace their *romances* and *bergerettes* have never been surpassed the world over. At first singing they may seem trivial or meaningless or dry. They always lack that rich strain of human genuineness which characterizes the German Lied. Without doubt they are artificial, not spontaneous in the more human meaning of the word. But if they are artificial it is in the best sense. They represent the most delicate conscious artistry, the nicest adjustment of the means to the end, the more expertly for being achieved with the simplest materials. The singer needs a quite special faculty to understand them. The joy of them is that of perfection in limited space, of work well done. The singer must have a complete command over detail, must be conscious of the relations of each note he is singing. The beauty of these songs is that of perfect good taste. They do not obtrude themselves, they do not assume a higher value than they possess, they do not seek undue praise. They are restrained as a well-mannered hostess is restrained in talking of politics or religion to her guests. It is not that she is insincere, only that she feels it is not the time for unrestrained sincerity. Like a true gentleman of the world, these songs hate the too obvious. Like a true aristocrat, they refrain from laying bare their souls; they value themselves too highly to exhibit their own virtues. They seek to be elegant and suave and courteous. In short, they seek to be 'good form.'

But a very different ideal from that of good form was about to burst upon French national life. Rousseau's highly colored writings had carried with them the

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germs of the great Revolution. A few of the best observers were able to see that conditions could not stay as they were, that human emotions, long inarticulate, must soon spring to violent expression. The lovely romance, *Plaisir d'amour* (1785), mingling with such an innocent military song as *Malbrouk's s'en va-t-en guerre*, could show no hint of the completely changed state of the public emotions five years later. In 1789 the storm broke. Europe realized that the people had entered the institution of government. And soon, too, in their crude way, the people had begun to enter the institution of French musical art. A certain fiddler-beggar, playing daily for *sous* on the *Pont Neuf*, one Ladré by name, picked up a lively dance tune, heaven knows where, which he played daily on his fiddle and presently published under the name, *Carillon national*. And some one, even more obscure to history, set words to it, beginning with the immortal phrase which Benjamin Franklin had repeated continually in France in reference to the American Revolution—*Ça ira!* ('It is coming!'). These words shall not here be called poetry. Yet they had certain of the supreme virtues of poetry, namely, simplicity of language and utter sincerity of statement. '*Ah, ça ira, ça ira, ça ira!*' sang the mob as it led its captives to their death. '*Les aristocrats à la lanterne*' ('Hang the aristocrats!'). Such sentiments were not exalted. Their statement was far from delicate. Similar sentiments toward the peasants had many a time been expressed with infinite grace and good taste in the court of Louis XVI. But when the mob had achieved the ability to think 'Hang the aristocrats' and to make a song of it and to sing that song aloud on the streets a new force had entered into the life of men. And, what is more to our purpose, a new force had entered into the art of song. Never before had emotion been expressed so directly or so violently. The tune is something like our 'Dixie,' though without



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its joyousness. It is a fiddler's tune, distinctly unsingable, especially since it was ignorantly arranged so as to lie in places far above the compass of the untrained voice. But its spirit was that of flowing blood and clattering iron. To this day *Ça ira* produces an effect of emotional savageness which can hardly be duplicated in all song literature.

And Paris presently gained, from some unknown source, another tune, almost equally effective and with words equally to the point. It was the *Carmagnole*, with its grim refrain, *Vive le son du canon* ('Long live the sound of the cannon'). This was sung daily in what is now the beautiful *Place de la Concorde*, where, during the 'Reign of Terror,' scores of aristocrats and political suspects were executed daily. The mob liked to see the blood flow and, joining hands in a great circle, would bellow this very singable tune and its sentiments to the just Heavens. But this song was overshadowed in popularity by another—the famous *Marseillaise*, which has been called, perhaps justly, the greatest of all songs. Rouget de Lisle, a military engineer and dilettante musician, wrote the poem and the melody one night in Strassburg, early in 1792, for the troops to sing at the review the next day. He called it *Chant de Guerre*. The song made its way to Marseilles and was taken up by the body of Republican volunteers on their forced march to Paris in July, 1792. It instantly spread in the capital, being known as *le Chant des Marseillais*. The Marseillians, with this song on their lips, were among the foremost in the storming of the Tuileries a few days later, when the king finally became the helpless prisoner of the people. Thenceforth it accompanied the Republican armies on their victorious marches through Europe. It is part of the irony of such things that de Lisle, who wrote the great Republican song of the Revolution, was born a royalist and remained one till his death. Patriotic songs, during the

## FORERUNNERS OF SCHUBERT

revolutionary period, appeared in great abundance, but the great majority of them, as always at such times, were vapid and artistically insignificant. From among them, however, have remained two or three of exceptional quality. One is Gossec's 'Hymn to the Supreme Being,' designed as a religious song which an anti-ecclesiastical government could use without inconsistency, and Méhul's noble *Chant du départ*, written to be sung at the departure of the armies, and still so used. This song, which was Napoleon's favorite (he forbade the *Marseillaise* as too violent), represented the pure Republican element of the Revolution, as opposed to the more violent communistic elements. In its elevation of style, in its perfect fitness of words and music, it remains one of the greatest patriotic hymns of the world.

### VIII

Leading up to and even post-dating Schubert's time we find two names which must enter into every history of song. The first is that of Ludwig Spohr (1784-1859). Spohr presents a peculiar problem. One of the most eminent musicians of his day and a man known before all else as an innovator, he has come to be the merest dead wood of musical history, a part of the gigantic tree, but a part which has become useless while other parts are still flourishing. Spohr felt, as Beethoven felt, that the old harmonic order had reached its zenith and that the time was ripe for freer and more daring expression. He was constantly straining to achieve this, but he lacked sufficient genius and his effort remains—only straining. He was always searching for expressive nuance, but his stock of tricks was limited and his emotional range slight. His many songs have completely dropped out of sight. In them detail is elaborated until one loses all sense of form and outline.

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The other song writer who must be mentioned here is, of course, Beethoven. Beethoven's songs do not often find a place in song recitals nowadays, but they are an organic link in the great German hierarchy from Heinrich Albert to Schubert. In addition to three songs of finest inherent quality we must credit him with the practical invention of the song cycle and the cultivation of free form and expressive detail in a way that clearly foreshadows Schubert. The three great songs mentioned are: 'The Glory of God,' \* *In questa tomba*, and the *Busslied*. The first is as noble a strain as anything in the great symphonies, a finer product because a simpler one than Schubert's *Die Allmacht* in the same spirit. The *Busslied* has a long, half declamatory introduction following the words with faithful accuracy, presently, as the lyric element becomes more marked, settling into a measured song, over an impressive bass which is instinct with religious dignity. The second, *In questa tomba*, concentrates in a few lines of music the grim seriousness of the words. *An die ferne Geliebte* ('To the Far-off Loved One') is a true cycle, as Schumann later understood the form. The songs are connected by modulating intermezzos on the piano and the last song is followed by a piano postlude which introduces the melody of the first. The songs themselves are not of first quality, but the form and intent of the cycle are yet another proof of Beethoven's astonishingly progressive genius. This cycle seems to look forward to Schumann rather than to Schubert. It uses, in fact, not a few of Schumann's own tricks—especially the deceptive cadence—to lend an 'atmospheric' quality to the music, or to prevent too great a finality in a musical phrase which accompanies an unfinished thought. The piano part shows a conscious effort to make the separate details expressive in their own right. Beethoven, in this cycle, was emphatically writing in the new and

\* See Musical Examples (Vol. XIII).

## FORERUNNERS OF SCHUBERT

not in the old style. The singer should be familiar with this remarkable group if he is to appreciate the later work of Schumann. (The final song, *Nimm sie hin denn, diese Lieder*, is well worth knowing for its own sake.) Though Beethoven is not one of the great names in song literature, these pieces show eloquently that the great symphonist touched no form that he did not enrich.

## CHAPTER VIII

### FRANZ SCHUBERT

Art-song and the romantic spirit—Precursors of Schubert—Schubert's contribution to song; Schubert's poets—Classification of Schubert's songs—Faults and virtues—The songs in detail; the cycles—Schubert's contemporaries.

IF the art-song begins with Franz Schubert there are two reasons for it. The first is the comparatively accidental one that Schubert was the greatest of lyric geniuses—the song writer *par excellence*. The second is that just as he arrived upon the scene the romantic element in music began to gain the upper hand.

For modern song is nine-tenths a romantic product. There might be such a thing as a classic art-song, but its existence is hardly more than hypothetical. Almost by definition the art-song is opposed to what we call the 'classic' spirit in music. For the art-song, let us recall, is, above all, a personal, detailed expression. It is intimate, subjective, predominantly emotional. The classic spirit (in music as well as in the other arts) avoids the emotion that is too personal and too subjective as something immodest—much as a young girl would avoid telling the details of her love affairs to strangers. The classic is always inclined to stress the formal elements. But the very definition of the *durchkomponiertes Lied* (which is almost synonymous with the term 'art-song') is that it does not adhere to a common form, being free to formulate itself according to the requirements of the text.

It must be more than a coincidence, then, that Schubert, the master song-writer, came at a time when mu-

## ART SONG AND THE ROMANTIC SPIRIT

sic was bursting forth into romantic expression. Romantic song could not have been born much earlier. For music, as an instrument of emotional expression, did not come to maturity much earlier. Emotion we do find expressed in Haydn and Mozart certainly, but it is subordinate, restrained, and not very precise. It rarely seems to be the prime object of the music. The prime object seems rather to be the giving of pleasure through the beauty of musical patterns. The music must not be obviously inappropriate to the words of an aria, but it is not thought of as expressing their sense in itself. The movements of a Mozart symphony may have for us some mild emotional connotation; but in the composer's mind, in all probability, it was not the emotion which germinated the music, but the music which germinated the emotion. The music of the long period before Schubert was predominantly formal. It became increasingly complex and refined. It greatly enlarged musical technique and the means of expression. From the emotional point of view the eighteenth century was *storing up* the technical materials which the nineteenth was destined to *use up*.

It was Beethoven who developed the expressive power of music to its grandest proportions. Never has emotion been shown more powerful, beauty more dignified, than in his symphonies. The art of music, as it passed from his hands into those of younger men, was a grand and universal instrument, equal to any emotional demand men might want to make upon it. But, if Beethoven had developed all these capacities in music, he had by no means used them all. Emotion in his music is that of the epic poet, broad and grand, rather than that of the lyricist, personal and subtle. He had developed his instrument to marvellous perfection. He had played upon it only a few of its tunes. The greatest of the classicists, he was the man who taught the romanticists their trade. He indicated how music

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could be used primarily for emotional expression. But the doing of it he necessarily left largely to those who came after.

Among the first and the greatest of these was Schubert. He was born to sing. He loved a beautiful melody beyond anything else. In some ways he was like a woman, responding with infinite tenderness and delicacy to the impressions that came to him from without, divining shades of feeling which a man can rarely catch.

And, just when this man came, burning to write personal and emotional songs, Beethoven had forged the finished instrument for the purpose. By this time all the conceptions of rhythm and design had been agreed upon among musicians. The scales and the modes had been adopted, the sense of the tonic deeply inculcated in every hearer, the independence of all the keys had been established and their relation agreed upon. All the ordinary positions of chords had been tested, and all the normal progressions agreed upon. Composers had experimented with many forms and had worked out the capacities of each. In short, men had come to an almost complete agreement concerning the conventions of musical technique. If this had not been so, it would not yet have been time for romantic song. For, just as a poem can have no precise meaning until all matters of words and syntax have been agreed upon, so music cannot become accurately expressive while people are vague in their minds about the identity of this or that chord. In the same way freedom of form could have no meaning for people until the laws of form were wholly understood. The subtleties of emotion could not be expressed until people generally had begun to feel in music the emotions to be subdivided.

The things that Schubert did with music in 1815 were hardly dreamt of twenty years before. There were occasional foreshadowings, nothing else. Mozart, always

## PRECURSORS OF SCHUBERT

technically flawless, did not approach his full creative maturity until toward his death, when he gave evidence of becoming one of the greatest of innovators. And it is Mozart, whose music Schubert knew well and admired beyond measure, who chiefly foreshadowed romantic song before Beethoven's great period. In the famous 'Statue' scenes of *Don Giovanni* Mozart seems suddenly to have peeped into a whole new world of music—the world of primary emotional expression. The same sense of half-discovered expressive possibilities we catch in some of his later symphonies. And in his last opera, 'The Magic Flute,' there are songs preserving the emotional richness of the best German folk-songs. Such arias as *In diesen heiligen Hallen* or *Isis und Osiris* are the last word in song before Schubert broke through the bonds of form and established the *durchkomponiertes Lied*.

### I

But song proper before Schubert is largely in the hands of men who by no means hold a primary place in musical history. Of course, it can nowhere be said to have a beginning. But we can sense the feeling for romantic song as far back as the *Geistliche Lieder* of Philipp Emanuel Bach, published in the middle of the eighteenth century. The preface to these songs is a remarkable document. Bach says that he has tried to set fitting melodies to the words; that where the various stanzas of a song were so different in spirit that a single melody could not express both with equal faithfulness he has tried to strike an average between all the stanzas and to compose the tune which will be most appropriate to all; that he considers it unjust to the poem to compose a tune which is suitable only to the first stanza, as is the usual practice; and, finally, that he realizes that Gellert's poems, being didactic,



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are not of the sort best suited for musical settings, yet the high earnestness of the poet's work justifies musical treatment.

These remarks foreshadow the romantic spirit in more than one respect. First, Bach recognizes the importance and integrity of the text: the music exists in order to enhance the poem, not the poem in order to sing the music. Next, Bach feels the power and the obligation to express the spirit of the words in detail. Further, he clearly feels the contradiction inherent in the strophic form—making one tune do service for various dissimilar stanzas. Finally, he feels that song is at its best when it is emotional. In all this he is entirely at one with the romantic song writers, from Schubert on. In his criticism of the strophic form he has put his finger on the central problem of the art-song. It is true, his solution of the difficulty was different from that of the romanticists, as was inevitable with a composer who came half a century before the problem was ripe. But he shows in his preface that he regards his solution as no more than tentative.

The songs themselves are not remarkable. They are much like the *Geistliche Lieder* of the composer's great father, except that a subtle and almost indefinable change has come over them in the direction of the 'intimate.' They are short melodies, much like a German chorale, except that they have a gentler, smoother movement. The strophes are sometimes in one of the recognized melodic forms and sometimes comparatively free. When closely compared they reveal not a little individuality (which is undoubtedly what the composer was aiming at), but, taken as a whole, they seem too much like short cantata arias to suggest expressive song.

The real spirit of song was preserved in the German *singspiele*. These were lively dramatic entertainments, interspersed with songs, like the English ballad operas,

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except that the music was usually composed especially for the piece. The *singspiele* were not taken seriously by the educated classes, hence the lightest kind of joyousness reigned in them, and the music was that which would appeal most quickly to the hearts of the people. The tunes were, in fact, generally as much like true folk-songs as their composers could make them. *Singspiele* were written and performed by the hundreds during the eighteenth century. Many of the more popular songs were remembered and sung by the people as half-naturalized folk-songs, and the successful composers were usually fertile producers of songs independent of the *singspiele*. This was the true song-tradition of Germany before Schubert's time. It grew out of the art of the people and spoke familiarly to all. It was a dignified and firmly established art institution, though it was given hardly more recognition by the great musicians of the time than the symphony composers of to-day give to operetta. The *singspiel* folk-song type, moreover, was the type which was called into service for the setting of the works of the standard poets of the time. Zelter's settings of Goethe's poems were scarcely to be distinguished, in point of form, from the songs that were sung in the cheap theatres.

Among the best of the *singspiel* composers was Johann Adam Hiller (1728-1804), also distinguished as the first director of the famous Gewandhaus concerts in Leipzig and as perhaps the first writer of true *durchkomponierte Lieder*. His songs kept the popular flavor, but strove for vigorous expression of the text and, in doing this, broke out of the simple strophe or stanza form. The spirited character of Hiller's *singspiele* is suggested by the names of some of them—"The Devil is Loose," "The Hunt," and "The Village Barber." Johann André (d. 1799), fertile composer of *singspiele*, has a place alongside of Hiller as a pioneer in that he was probably the first to adapt the *durchkomponiert* style

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to the ballad, setting Bürger's famous 'Lenore' soon after it appeared in 1775. The true ballad style, however, was more freely cultivated by Johann Rudolph Zumsteeg (d. 1802), commonly known as the inventor of the ballad form. He composed settings for several poems to which Schubert and Löwe later set their hands, notably Schiller's 'Ode to Joy,' *Des Pfarrers Tochter*, and *Ritter Toggenburg*. Johann Schulz, who was another prolific *singspiel* writer, is chiefly famous for his beautiful 'Songs in the Folk-Manner,' which appeared between 1782 and 1790, when Herder's pioneer collection of *Volkslieder* (words only) had just commenced to create an interest in the subject of popular song.

But the most famous *singspiel* composer of the time, and one of the most interesting personalities among the lesser musicians, was Johann Friedrich Reichardt (1752-1814). Unlike most musicians of the age, Reichardt was a man of wide interests and excellent education. At the age of twenty-three he became royal choir-master under Frederick the Great at Berlin. But he was a radical by temperament and seems to have caused the head that wore the crown to lie uneasy. His visits to Paris gave him such a sympathy with the approaching French revolution that he later lost his position in Berlin on account of his radical politics. For a time he was choirmaster at Cassel to Jérôme Bonaparte, Napoleon's brother, who was anxious to pose as a patron of art. Reichardt caught the 'folk-manner' in his *singspiele*, but he was not a naïve musician in the technical sense of the word. His choruses and concerted pieces sometimes show a grace and artistry which suggests Mozart, and his songs are always organically and artistically conceived. He set in the simple strophe style some sixty of Goethe's songs and Goethe's delightful *singspiel*, *Erwin und Elmire* (as did also André). We must give Reichardt praise for working

**Precursors of Schubert:**

**Johann Zumsteeg**

**Johann Friedrich Reichardt**

**Johann Adam Hiller**

**Carl Friedrich Zelter**

Procurators of Schubert:  
Johann Zumsteg  
Johann Friedrich Reichardt

Johann Adam Hiller  
Carl Friedrich Zelter





## SCHUBERT'S CONTRIBUTION TO SONG

in musicianly style, with a fresh vein of melody and a graceful sense in the organizing of it. But we should make a mistake if we gave him a very high place in the history of the development of song, for Schubert's earliest efforts tower far above his and they surely owe but little to them.

Schubert's admiration for Zumsteeg and for his use of the ballad form (to which we doubtless owe 'The Erl King') was extended to another song writer of the time, Karl Friedrich Zelter (1758-1832). This composer, who did a notable service as director at the Berlin *Singakademie*, was a personal friend of Goethe and had an extensive correspondence with him, which has been preserved and published. He set a great number of Goethe's songs in the simple and unpretentious style of Reichardt. This much pleased the poet, who was professedly not much of a musician. In fact, it seems likely that Zelter frankly directed the great man's musical tastes. Zelter's songs, some of which are still sung by German singing societies, are spirited and musicianly. In their manly and straightforward way they compel one's liking. If they do not figure as an element in musical history it is because their simple form offered little that was of service to the genius of Schubert.

## II

This genius was, along with that of Mozart, the most spontaneous the world of music had ever seen. It seemed to work by a sort of divination. Whereas Beethoven's musical ideas developed slowly and under great mental pressure from themes of little value, Schubert's songs often came into his mind almost in an instant complete from beginning to end. From the age of thirteen (and probably earlier) he was continually writing songs. Often he would compose as many as three or four in a single morning, especially when he



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was unusually pressed for money. Most of the time he did but little revising. If the musical idea as it came was not of fine quality, then it could go to the scrap-basket or to anybody who cared for it; there were plenty more good tunes where that came from. Schubert's supply of beautiful melodies was inexhaustible. He never had to nurse and pet a tune in order to get the maximum of musical service out of it. More than any other song-writer Schubert 'sings himself.' And his songs, for the most part, 'wrote themselves.' The poet would pick up a book on a friend's table and, discovering therein some lovely poems, would be seized by musical settings for them. Sometimes he wrote as though in a trance. The music seemed to come from some anterior source, and, passing through his brain on its way to the paper, to make him intoxicated. When he died at the age of thirty he left behind him some eleven hundred musical works, of which more than six hundred were songs of all descriptions. This was the product of scarcely more than fifteen years of activity. It is obvious there could not have been much revision. But this is hardly evidence that Schubert was incapable of self-criticism. He had his favorites among his songs and doubtless realized that many were as worthless as later generations have found them. And he did, in certain cases, spend considerable effort in revision; there exist, for instance, several different versions of 'The Erl King' in Schubert's handwriting. But his lack of revision was a result of his overpowering fertility rather than of carelessness. If he kept on writing new songs he might strike a masterpiece any time. Why waste his time polishing second-rate pieces?

Briefly stated, what Schubert did for song was to establish it as one of the great departments of music. We know what it was before his time—an unpretentious amusement, considered appropriate chiefly for the vaudeville theatres and the banquet tables of rois-

## SCHUBERT'S CONTRIBUTION TO SONG

tering students. Among the educated classes song was loved, but hardly respected. The great composers wrote songs only as bagatelles for their amusement or for a special occasion. It was hardly realized that the song form, so slight and so modest, could receive the burden of great ideas and radical innovation.

Schubert, by force of genius, proved that the song could be as great intensively as an opera or oratorio could be extensively; that to write a perfect song was as difficult and worthy a task for a great artist as to write an oratorio. To prove this he showered all the riches of his artistic equipment on the song. First of all, he gave to it great melodies. The melodies of the best art-songs before his time could not be compared with the great melodies which musicians had put into symphonies and operas. Musicians had felt that songs were not worthy of their best melodies, but only of their second and third best. Schubert gave to song his very best.

Next, Schubert chose (among his many texts) some of the greatest short poems in German literature. Musicians previously had generally considered the words a very unimportant part of vocal music. True, the music of the eighteenth century (especially in Germany) is full of exceptions to this rule, but the exceptions occur as if by accident and prove that composers either didn't care or didn't know which texts were better and which were worse. It is true, also, that Reichardt, Zelter, and others set the poems of Goethe to music, but their settings were unpretentious and hardly aspired to be in themselves adequate to express Goethe's thoughts. With Schubert, for the first time, we find the greatest poetry married to the greatest music. It must be admitted, also, that Schubert's taste was not highly critical in the matter of poetry. Among his six hundred songs are a great many with insipid or pompous words. But some of these texts were written by

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Schubert's personal friends (such as his room-mate Mayrhofer) and were set as a personal compliment. Further, Schubert, who worked daily, did not always find the best of poems at hand, and was obliged to take what he could get, though he probably knew which were better and which were worse. And, finally, he was generally best inspired by the best poems, which should be a proof of his sensitiveness to poetic excellence. At any rate, one finds the texts of Schubert's songs almost an anthology of the best German lyrical poems written in the century before his death. And with some of the verses is music that seems to have been made by one and the same master artist to fit for all time. On the whole, though Schubert was not a man educated in *belles lettres*, he showed a vivid appreciation of poetic excellence which has been a mark of great song writers ever since.

Next, Schubert showed a marvellous sense of poetry in music. The music before him had been, as we have said, predominantly formal. With Beethoven it had reached its most perfect formal development and with the symphony and sonatas of Beethoven's later years broke through formal bonds in its search after more intense expression. The violent conflict between form and expression is the glory (and to some minds the defect) of Beethoven's later work. But Schubert in his songs seems to feel nothing of this struggle. It is as though he had been born on the other side; as though Beethoven had done the fighting for him. Or it is as though a mountain stream had struggled through rocks and over a precipice to reach the quiet level of the plains below. With Schubert we feel only joyous spontaneous expression of the words. The expressive resources of music which his forerunners had prepared are laid at his feet, and from them he chooses with wonderful acuteness the details and devices he needs. This sense of poetry could hardly be found in the songs

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of Reichardt and Zelter. Sung with the words their music would doubtless seem appropriate. But played without the words to point the meaning they would seem pleasing but colorless. On the other hand, if you play the songs of Schubert on the piano you will get, to a surprising degree, the feelings conveyed by the words. It is not too much to say that before Schubert song music was appropriate only; with Schubert song became *expressive*.

Finally, Schubert gave to the art-song that freedom of form which has been a characteristic of it ever since. Not that he was the first to write the *durchkomponierte* song or any of the other freer forms, but he was the first with the genius necessary to establish such forms (or formlessness) for all time. Schubert's predecessors had not been pedants. Within their limited capacities some of them had been genuine poets of sentiment. But form had nevertheless retained its hold on the spirit of their song writing. The regular recurrence of measured lines, or the building up of the song according to a scheme of regular repetitions or alterations, had been to them a matter of second nature (except when a Hiller or a Zumsteeg tentatively broke through for experiment's sake). Such a song as Schubert's *Aufenthalt* or the early 'Gretchen at the Spinning Wheel,' in which there is no discoverable scheme yet a most cogent unity, would have been hardly conceivable to these early pioneers.

Schubert, then, with a marvellous fund of melody, a sense of poetic values in words and music, and a free instinct for expressive form, did for the song what Haydn had done for the symphony—put it on the musical map. He was able to do this not alone because he was a great musician, but because there were great poets in Germany whose lyrics he could set. Let us see who and of what character these poets were.

The poets whom Schubert set to music (over 100 in

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all) represent several stages of a tremendous upheaval in German life and literature—roughly, the period of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars. For convenience we may divide them into three classes—the ‘Storm and Stress’ poets, the Romantic poets, and the ‘young-German’ poets. The *Sturm und Drang*, or ‘Storm and Stress,’ tendency was the German equivalent of the pre-revolutionary upheaval among the educated classes of France. Its ideal was that of the highest perfection for the individual—personal rights rather than social duties. The so-called Romantic movement (in the narrower meaning of the term) was at its height during Napoleon’s period of power. It was double. On the one hand, it was *Sturm und Drang*, individualism carried to its extreme, with a high premium set on the imagination and a morbid interest in what we should to-day call ‘psychology.’ On the other hand, it was the growth of the social and national spirit which aroused a sense of nationalism in Germany under Napoleon’s tyranny and enabled the Germans gloriously to shake off the French yoke. The third period, in which Schubert did most of his actual work, was that of disillusionment, when the liberal dreams of the German enthusiasts had been met by the stupid reactionism of the German princes and the Congress of Vienna. The German uprising against Napoleon had been synonymous in the minds of most with a movement toward liberal institutions and political freedom. Under the royal houses of Germany the people were forced back, at the point of the sword, to a state little better than mediævalism. The poets of the ‘young-German’ movement saw that the dreams of the previous generation had been made a fiasco and turned to cynicism, with just a shadow of a bitter dream of vengeance stored up for the future.

The great poets of the *Sturm und Drang* movement were, of course, Goethe and Schiller. Goethe, one of

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the most universal minds the world has ever known, was able to enter into a situation or a human emotion so intensely that he was an ideal lyric poet. His command over the music of the German language was complete. All Germany was dazzled by the wealth of color and nuance which he found in life and reflected in his poetry. Schiller was in every way his inferior. His inflated rhetoric always stole the lyric quality from his poems, which never pictured truth, either outer or inner. But by the sheer energy of his spirit Schiller was a man of the time. It is worth noting that, though Schubert set nearly fifty of his texts, not a single masterpiece resulted. For there is in Schiller, properly considered, little or nothing to inspire a genuinely lyric poet. And, as is often the case in lyric poetry, the minor men do some of the best work. Some of Schubert's best texts are supplied by Claudius, Schubart, Stollberg, and Hölty, minor members of the fraternity which stirred up all Germany to the expectation of a profound revolution. These men were crying out against the vices of the aristocracy, or praising the simple life of the peasants, as Herder had taught them. Their songs were a glorification of the individual, proclaiming the intensity and beauty of his spontaneous feelings—ideal lyric material.

The era of the Napoleonic wars brought a new generation of poets to Germany. It was the period when the vision of great deeds was stirring every one to demonstrate his own power. This side of the movement, represented in Schubert's songs by the brothers Schlegel, was decidedly morbid. But there was another side. For Napoleonic oppression had aroused a new sense of dignity and national solidarity in German hearts, and there arose a group of poets to sing of it. Most typical is Körner, author of the famous sword song, who volunteered for the army, saying to his father: 'Germany is rising; my art sighs for her

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fatherland'—and died in battle. This adoption by art of a new fatherland was signalized by a new return of poetry to all that was popular and traditional in German life and history. It is to this inspiration that we owe poems by Uhland and Müller, which Schubert set to music.

The third era was that of disillusionment, when Platen could write

' . . . man kann hienieden  
Nichts Schlech'res als ein Deutscher sein.'

The lyric poetry of the time became either a cynical grasping of selfish interests, as often in Heine, or a renunciation of the outer word, a peace which is to be found in contemplation and humble love, as in Rückert.

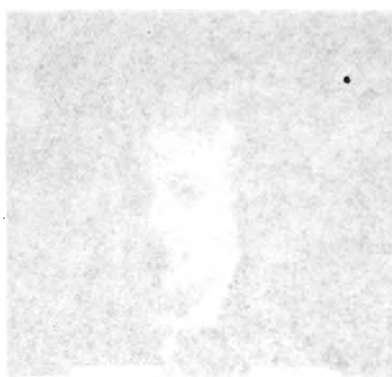
In translation, also, Schubert was familiar with the work of certain foreign poets, notably Shakespeare and Walter Scott. To the inspiration of the former we owe at least two masterpieces, 'Who Is Sylvia?' and 'Hark, Hark, the Lark!' From the latter we have the wonderful 'Ave Maria.' We should not forget, also, the songs of Ossian, now almost forgotten. These were forgeries (in all probability) by a Scotch schoolmaster, purporting to be translations from the Gaelic of the songs of the minstrel Ossian, who had been no more than a tradition for centuries. The literary world took them in earnest, and such men as Goethe became enthusiastic over their wild and rugged imagery. But to us they seem rhetorical and far removed from the simplicity of genuine folk-poetry. And Schubert seems to have felt this, for, though he set eight of the long Ossian songs, not one of his settings is memorable. Again the absence of the true lyric spark had left him cold.



**Poets of the Romantic Period:**

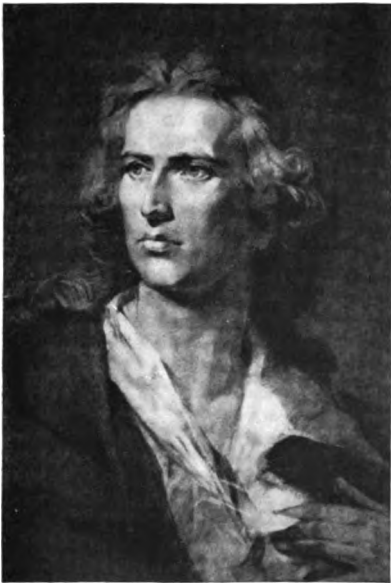
Goethe  
Schiller

Hugo  
Heine











## CLASSIFICATION OF SCHUBERT'S SONGS

### III

Among Schubert's songs we find an extraordinarily wide range of form and subject-matter—so wide that all song writers since his time have not been able much to enlarge it. We have said that he was the first to apply musical genius to the *durchkomponiertes Lied*. But he was not a specialist in this form. He seems to have had no especial preferences, but to have been guided by the nature of his poem. A number of his songs are in the strophe form—simply contrasting phrases of the music forming the tune, which is repeated without change for each stanza of the words, as in the simple folk-tune type. Of this class are some of Schubert's best songs, such as 'The Heather Rose,' 'The Fisher,' 'Praise of Tears,' 'Wandering,' 'The Brook's Lullaby,' 'Hark, Hark, the Lark!' \* and many others.

Next we find what we might call the 'developed strophe' form, in which the simple stanza organization is preserved in spirit, but some change enters into the make-up of the whole song in accordance with the demands of the text. Examples of this are the famous *Du bist die Ruh*, in which the final strophe is much altered to express the intenser feelings of the poet; or the *Gute Nacht*, from the *Winterreise* series, in which the melody of one stanza is sung in the major to convey the contrasting effect of calmness; or the 'Serenade,' in which the repeated strophe is followed by a free coda necessary to give completeness to the idea. In the class of the 'developed strophe' form we might group such pieces as 'Her Portrait,' which repeats the main strophe after a contrasting middle section. Or there are such songs as 'By the Sea,'\* which are almost in the strict strophe form, but varied here and there in some minor detail, proving that however much Schu-

\* See Musical Examples (Vol. XIII).

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bert felt the beauty of form he did not feel its dogma.

Finally, there is the quite free or *durchkomponierte* form. The examples of this are innumerable in Schubert's works: we recall easily the famous *Aufenthalt* ('Abode') and *Doppelgänger* ('The Double'),\* *Der Wanderer*, and *Das Wirtshaus*. In these songs there is every variation from a deceptive strophic form to the utmost dissimilarity, and yet there remains always a *sense* of unity which is the work of a master.

Besides the pure lyrics Schubert wrote ballads and scenas. The former are simply stories told in verse. Unlike the lyric, the ballad is highly objective, seeing the characters as things apart and as acting for themselves; yet like the lyric it is highly sympathetic with emotions, and sometimes identifies itself alternately with one character and another as completely as though it were a lyric. This is because of the dramatic quality implicit in every story,—a quality which is particularly attractive to the primitive imagination. The ballad, in short, is a miniature drama, in which the characters speak in their own words with each other, and in which rapid and vigorous action is abundant. Examples of this form in Schubert's songs are Schiller's 'The Diver,' and of course 'The Erl King.'

We should also distinguish a third class of songs—the *scena*. This is a combination of the lyric and the ballad; it is essentially an emotional utterance, but it usually pictures the characters and the scene, and often involves some sort of dramatic action. The Ossian Songs partake of the nature of the *scena*, but the best example is Schiller's *Erwartung*, in which the singer is waiting for his sweetheart to come to him, and is beguiled by various noises of the night into thinking it is she.

The scenas and the ballads involve not a little of the declamatory style, which is quite unlyrical. Decla-

\* Musical Examples (Vol. XIII).

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mation in song is familiar to us in the recitatives of the older operas, but declamation in the true sense is more melodious than dry recitative. It is, in fact, genuine melody, with all elements of melodic beauty, except that it is independent of strict measure and rhythm, receiving all its accents from the words which it follows with greatest nicety. The possibilities of this style of music have only begun to be developed in the last two or three decades. In Schubert declamation is usually on the right track, but is pretty likely to be uninteresting. We must make an exception, however, of such masterly bits of declamation as the last line of 'The Erl King,' in which the half-spoken announcement, 'Lo, in his arms the child was dead,' closes the ballad abruptly and seems to frame it off from the workaday world; or the last line of 'The Wanderer,' in which Schubert's poetic sense reinforced the emphatic word with an emphatic melodic note: *Dort, wo du nicht bist, dort ist das Glück*. But on the whole we must admit that the whole body of Schubert's declamatory and dramatic songs is hardly worth the trouble of study, except for the purpose of enlarging one's knowledge of the composer. If it were not for the wonderful 'Erl King,' greatest of ballads, people would doubtless be saying that Schubert was a lyric song-writer only, and had no feeling for the ballad form.

### IV

Of Schubert's six hundred songs, as we have said, many are of little or no musical value. Sometimes the melody seems too facile; it expresses nothing; it is like every other ordinary tune. And sometimes, especially in the longer ballads and scenas, there is a lack of any musical character; commonplace chords and scraps of indifferent melody succeed each other to fatigue. The length is sometimes enormous. 'The

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Diver' occupies nearly forty printed pages, and many others between fifteen and twenty.

It is more regrettable that some of the songs should be sad mixtures of greatness and triviality. 'Death-Music' is such a song. The opening bars have a deep solemnity, which is almost equal to the dignity of the theme, but seems just a little too thin or facile. Then on the words *Hebe aus dem ird'schen Ringen* comes a passage which is one of Schubert's great moments, and this is repeated in finer development on the words: *Alles grosses werd' ich sehen*, until one can almost feel one's self carried into the mysteries of death. But then follow three pages of melody which are irritating, for they have much beauty and expressiveness, but seem aimless and disorganized. In 'Viola,' which is a matter of twenty-one pages, there are one or two of the most gracious melodies Schubert ever wrote, but the song as a whole, what with length and formlessness, is hopeless. *Fülle der Liebe*, again, is both beautiful and expressive, altogether a distinguished piece of work, except that its movement soon becomes so monotonous that it is unendurable.

So Schubert is often betraying the rapidity with which he worked. But he has left us at least one hundred songs which are immortal. First of all, they are worth knowing for their wonderful stock of melodies, as pure and rich as any composer in the world has ever given us. The enchantment can hardly wear off with such melodies as those of 'Praise of Tears,' 'The Trout,' *Du bist die Ruh*, 'The Linden Tree,' 'The Inn,' 'To Sylvia,' 'Litany,' and 'The Serenade.'

It is by no means the melody of the drawing-room. The dainty, snobbish grace of the French *bergerette* is foreign to Schubert. He seems anxious to sing with everybody. It is recorded that one of his favorite pastimes was walking out with a friend on a Sunday afternoon to one of the villages in the neighborhood of

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Vienna, and watching the peasants dance and hearing them sing their songs. This popular sense persists in all Schubert's music, however delicate may be his delineation of mood. He had nothing of the aristocrat in him. The son of a schoolmaster, accustomed to poverty, and accustomed to teach in an almost menial capacity in the house of Count Esterhazy, he acquired none of the tastes of the aristocrat and was content to take his pleasures as other people did. Besides, the whole tradition of German music has been remarkably close to the people. Even Mozart, the most polished of composers, wrote in 'The Magic Flute' music that would have delighted any peasant. So we are not surprised to find in Schubert's lyrics a strain of folk-song, especially in the cadences and progressions which the Germans love so well. Take, for instance, the continually recurring cadence of the song *Sei mir gegrüsst*, or that of 'Praise of Tears.' It sets the spirit for the whole of the song. And it is taken from the very bone and sinew of German music. Or take the short middle section of 'The Wanderer,'—in which the Wanderer cries out, 'Where art thou, Where art thou, My beloved land!'—or the first of the Erl King's songs in the ballad 'The Erl King'; or the whole strophic tune of 'The Fisher.' Hum these over two or three times. Then take at random two or three German folk-songs—*Ach du lieber Augustin* and *Immer langsam voran*, or what not, and hum these. And then two or three French *bergerettes*. The relationship of Schubert will then be quite clear. These matters of musical analogy are subtle and slippery. They cannot be established by analysis. But they can always be proved or disproved by the sympathetic ear.

But Schubert was writing art-songs, not folk-songs. Accordingly he was obliged to give more precise meanings to his melodies than folk-songs choose to give. He must not sing only of love or sorrow, but of a cer-

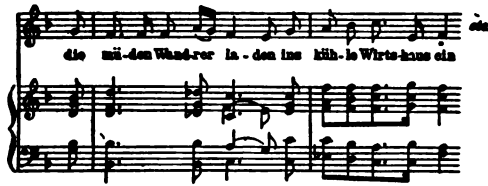


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tain mood of love or sorrow. This is what we mean by the refinement of melody. Not that the unrefined melody is less worthy or less beautiful, only that it is less precise. In refining his tunes Schubert's delicate artistic sense stood him in glorious stead. The *Ave Maria* is first of all a beautiful German melody. But it is also a delicate, sensitive melody, which might have been sung by the essentially aristocratic Ellen. Or notice the delicacy of mood implied in Heine's poem *Ihr Bild*. It is essentially a civilized mood, one which comes over a person inside of a house with the lights turned low, a mood which a folk-song would never be called upon to express. Schubert catches it in a few simple notes. He does not strain his melody in order to make it express an unusual mood. He selects his notes—that is, refines the melody—until its expression has become specific and accurate instead of broad and general.

This matter of melodic refinement (which must be divined by a sort of sixth sense) leads us to one of the essential characteristics of Schubert's songs (and of art-songs in general)—namely, detailed expression. Here we can be more specific. Compared to later song-writers, Schubert makes very little effort to emphasize details in his texts. He is never willing in his lyrical pieces to distort or disturb the flow of the melody or the design of the whole, in order to illustrate a detail. But a slight study of his songs will show that he is never overlooking these details. And when it seems to him proper to give them precise expression, the device is always at his finger-tips. Take one of the loveliest of all his songs, *Das Wirthshaus*—'The Inn'—from the cycle *Winterreise*. The whole song should be played through first to get the mood of weariness, of spiritual hunger and thirst, that pervades it. Then on the words *die müden Wanderer*—'tired wanderers,' comes this progression:

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Notice the wonderful D flat of the accompaniment. And notice too with what magic the simple chords of the next measure seem to fit the word *kühle Wirtshaus*,—the 'cool tavern.' A little later, on the words: *bin matt zum Niedersinken*—'tired to exhaustion'—is the following passage:



Notice the G flat of the accompaniment, how it creeps into the harmonic framework and gives poignancy to the expression. And then four measures further on, on the words: *doch weisest du mich ab?*—'and do you turn me away?'—there is this very simple musical passage:



Only one altered chord, that containing the B natural, but what pathos lies in it!

An even finer instance of musical delineation is the song *Der Doppelgänger*, the last but one that Schubert ever wrote. Mr. Henderson, in his 'Songs and Song Writers,' justly says that this wonderful song anticipates Wagner's theories and methods. Here we have the continuous melody, the leit-motif (the first four measures of the accompaniment), the declamatory

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voice part, and the 'orchestral comment' which we associate with the Wagnerian music-dramas. We cannot fail to notice in this song the ghostly effect of the thick chords kept in the bass section of the pianoforte's range, nor the uncanny effect of the short, almost gasping, phrases for the voice, nor the fierce picturing of terror on the words *meine eigne Gestalt*. What couldn't Schubert have been in the history of music, asks Mr. Henderson, if he had lived!

Schubert's command over modulation is facile and abundant. Sometimes there is no rest in the matter of modulation. Yet the changes of key and mode never seem strange. Tonalties melt into one another, and voices lead as naturally as they do in the simple key-schemes of Haydn. The best of examples is the wonderful song, *Die Allmacht*. Nominally in the key of C major, it remains actually in this key for only about a fifth of its length. The astonishing simplicity and inevitableness of Schubert's modulations are well exemplified by the change from F major to G flat major on the words *Gross ist Jehovah der Herr* (at their next to last appearance). Wagner used precisely this modulation about ten years later for the climax to the great prayer in the opera *Rienzi*. But we find it no uncommon thing to discover that strokes of genius in other composers have been anticipated in Schubert.

But the richness and smoothness of Schubert's modulations, which are everywhere to be discovered in his songs, are not the most important qualities from the artistic standpoint. The important thing is the marvellous deftness with which the composer uses his modulation for expressive purposes. Let us return to *Das Wirtshaus*, a thorough knowledge of which is a liberal education in Schubert's art. Modulation here is like flowing water. But notice especially the last (repeated) line of the poem: *Nun weiter denn, nun weiter, mein treuer Wanderstab*—'then on again, my faithful

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wanderer's staff.' The first half of the line is in C minor. Then on the words *mein treuer Wanderstab* it goes again into its original F major. The effect is past all analysis. We feel the tragic vista of life ahead of the man, the eternal trudging along white dusty roads. The human pathos of the modulation is intense.

It is interesting to notice, in passing, that Schubert gets his most tragic and pathetic effects out of the major mode rather than out of the minor. Besides the example just quoted one recalls the entrance of the major in *Ihr Bild*,—an effort of most delicate pathos; and the ending of 'Death and the Maiden,' in which the coming of the major brings with it the feeling of deep human tragedy as contrasted with the somewhat spooky tragedy of the preceding minor. Schubert's effects, though usually very simple, rarely come from a reliance on conventional means.

Another of Schubert's expressive devices is famous. It is the dissonance of D flat against D against C (or a corresponding combination), recurring in 'The Erl King' when the boy shrieks in terror at the sight of the evil ghost. It was strenuously objected to by certain ones who heard it in Schubert's time, and it is recorded that one of the objectors withdrew his criticism because the compound dissonance resolved so smoothly. The justification, if justification is needed, is something other than this. It is that the device is tremendously expressive.

In 'The Erl King' we cannot fail to notice how the triplet motive in the accompaniment binds the song closely together. In nearly every case Schubert finds some means of accomplishing this end, when the free form of the song might threaten to distract one's attention. In a number of the *Müllerlieder*, in which the brook figures constantly, the rippling water is suggested (not imitated) in the accompaniment. The de-

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vices by which the suggestion is accomplished seem naïve to us to-day, but it is perhaps more artistic than an attempt at imitation would be.

Suggestive devices are innumerable. Note the movement of the breeze in 'Suleika's Second Song'; the opening chords, suggestive of deepening night over the sea, in *Am Meer*; the delicate will-o'-the-wisp figure in *Irrlicht*; the bass figure that suggests huge weight in *Atlas*; the leaping triplet figure in 'The Trout'; the tragic snatches of melody in the bass of *Aufenthalt*, and so on without limit. It must be remembered that such details as these were much more of a novelty in Schubert's time than now. A century ago the use of music for detailed expression was comparatively strange.

We should bear in mind, also, how slightly this attention to detail in Schubert affects the external unity of the song. Schubert's method (except in the long declamatory pieces) was essentially lyrical. He wanted to write a piece of music which, while truly expressive of the words, would be a beautiful piece of music even without them. He kept the organization and proportion of his music, as such, always in view. The whole course of song after him illustrates the conflict (which was the origin of the art-song in the first place) between this formal design and accuracy of expression. A simple strophic song can, as we know, be quite perfect in design. But only rarely can it also be quite accurate in the expression of the words. The musical realist will seek to make the music detailed and expressive at all costs. The many to whom beauty comes first, on the other hand, will admit the realistic detail only when it accords with the beauty of the pattern. It is instructive to note how Schubert solves the problem. While he was never a formalist in the stricter sense of the word, his sense of pattern beauty was such as would be pained at a realistic detail that

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was detrimental to form. Judged by modern standards he was conservative in his procedure. But considering his conservatism he managed to get a wonderful amount of detailed expression into his songs. No song-writer has ever had a more delicate and accurate feeling for these details of human realism.

### V

Schubert's genius will never be known to people who imagine they know it from the half dozen hackneyed songs that are most famous—the 'Serenade,' 'Hark, Hark the Lark!' 'Who Is Sylvia?' and one or two others. There is a little group of Schubert songs which are rarely heard and almost forgotten, which are of great beauty, such as the *Wiegenlied*, *An die Sonne*, *Gretchen's Gebet*, and *Clärchen's Lied*. And there are scores of others, which are known in a vague way, but not well known to many a singer. No singer should attempt to sing one of Schubert's songs in public without being familiar with most of these other lyrics.

Schubert reveals the folk genius in being able to achieve the highest beauty within the smallest compass. Such a snatch of melody as the first line of the 'Litany' is a work of pure genius. They say that the test of a picture is its ability to be 'lived with.' The same is true of a melody. The first line of the 'Litany,' as well as the whole of it, can be sung each day and never lose its charm. It has all the suave grace of a tune out of Italian opera. It might become cloying and sentimental. But it does not. It remains dignified and sincere. It reveals ever new beauties and adorable traits of character which could not be suspected at first glance. This kind of genius is beyond the analytical powers of the musical theorist to explain. The greatness of large forms—for instance, a symphony by Beethoven—can in part be explained, just as a very

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correct symphony can be written by a man without talent. But to write greatly within half a dozen bars—this is a miracle. Only the folk-composer and the highest conscious genius can achieve it.

We see the same genius in the final measures of 'Death and the Maiden.' The Maiden sees Death approaching, and begs him to pass by. He replies that he has not come to cause her pain. He is a friend and will give her peace and joy. And the music, a succession of the simplest chords, glides gradually into a major that seems to wring the tears by main force from the eyes. Every now and then Schubert introduces unexpectedly such a musical phrase, which seems to concentrate into half a dozen notes all the sincerity of the German genius. We find it in the 'Second Harper's Song' of the Mignon series, on the words: *Ihr lässt den Armen schuldig werden:*



or in the 'Praise of Tears':



or in *Der Lindenbaum*:



Of the songs that 'sing themselves,' Schubert has written many. We must mention 'The Fisher,' which is unusual in song literature as being a true ballad in strophe form; the 'Heather Rose,' which retains the quality of Goethe's words in that it must be intimately known to be appreciated; *Wohin*, from the *Müllerlieder*, in which the tune seems to flow as inevitably as the brook which is the motive of it; 'The Trout,' the melody of which Schubert used as the theme of the last movement of his famous string quartet; and the

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'Lullaby,' mentioned above. The flowing quality of these songs is due to the fact that they are closely in accord with the felt traditions of German music, containing a maximum of the usual and a minimum of the unusual, while remaining unique and creative as a whole. In other words, they have an abundance of the expected and nothing of the commonplace. And this is why it is of such extreme value for every musician to be familiar with a quantity of songs. Simple songs which are great in their human appeal have concentrated within themselves all that people throughout the centuries have agreed upon as beautiful. They contain in the simplest form the elements of all great complex music. The singer who can appreciate and love the simple song is not likely to go astray in singing the works of Strauss and Reger.

But Schubert's particular historic claim to greatness is his introduction of precise musical expression into the Song. This takes all forms—a variety as broad as his wonderful genius. In 'Sea Calm' it is a succession of quiet and slow chords, which preserve the evenness of the calm sea without its monotony. In 'The Wanderer,' it is a succession of slightly different emotions, each lyrically expressed, culminating in the impressive recitative. First the Wanderer announces that he has come from the mountains, ever searching for something. Then the lovely melody which Schubert later used in one of his quartets—the motive of unsatisfied wandering. Then, with a change of sentiment, comes the cause of the unrest—'Where art thou, My Native Land?'—a mere snatch of rich song. Then a quick movement as the Wanderer sees in his mind's eye the fresh greenness of his native hills. Then the moody wanderer's motive once more. And finally the two lines of recitative—with all the beauty of poetry and all the force of prose—'There, where thou art not, there is happiness.'



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'The Young Nun,' though it has perhaps been over-rated, shows a powerful dramatic expression of the singer's feeling as interpreted by surrounding nature (a favorite device of the Romantic poets). The song rises into religious exaltation, with the thunderstorm outside, as the nun returns resignedly to the praise of her religious contemplation. *Die Allmacht* is a song in the most exalted style of Beethoven, but executed with a technique which is utterly of the romantic school. God is praised by all his works, by the storm no less than by the devout heart in prayer. Each is expressed by Schubert in a musical passage of great beauty. Yet each section is but an inextricable part of the symphonic movement—for religious adoration is not a collection of separate feelings, but a great emotional synthesis. The music for Goethe's wonderful 'Wanderer's Evensong' is no less remarkable for the musical blending of shades of emotion. But it is something more, something which is in the highest degree typical of the art-song. For it follows the words, not only in expression but in accent, so that not a syllable is falsified. No recitative could be more just to the spoken value of the words. In fact, this song can be read as a pure recitative, in which the words, spoken sincerely and unaffectedly, correspond exactly with the music. And yet, looked at from the other side, it is a perfect melody. This blending of the declamatory and lyrical elements in a perfect synthesis is true to the spirit of the art-song. For no art-song is good that does any sort of violence to the text, as it would be spoken. And yet no art-song is a song if it has not a musical beauty of its own. And it is one of the highest tests of the trained singer to give full value to both these elements, without letting either crowd out the other. 'Gretchen's Prayer' is another fine example of this, less simple but no less perfect. Here, as the supplication rises into emotional entreaty, the music becomes more

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independently lyrical, floating in air as though to bear the petition to a higher sphere.

Schubert is the great exemplar of a form which has been cultivated by almost every composer since his time—the song-cycle. He was not the originator of the form, for Beethoven (in addition to others) had written a true song-cycle in *An die Ferne Geliebte*. But Schubert was the first to show the full possibilities of the song-cycle.

He has left us three such works—the *Müllerlieder*, of twenty songs; the *Winterreise*, of twenty-four; and the *Schwanengesang*, of fourteen. The last was not planned by the composer as a cycle, but was issued as such by his publisher just after his death, when (as has so often been the case) the Germans had waked up partially to the genius they had lost. And for once the commercial publisher was justified. For the songs were actually Schubert's swansong, being written in the last few weeks of his life (the final one of the series was the very last of his compositions). Moreover, they are of a pessimistic character which is rarely betrayed in Schubert's earlier works.

The *Müllerlieder*, or 'Miller's Songs,' were composed by Schubert in his first enthusiasm over Wilhelm Müller's poems. It is related that he went to call upon a friend one evening, found the friend out but discovered the book lying upon his table, became immersed in it while waiting, and finally walked away with it in his pocket. The next day he apologized for the borrowing, pleading that the poems had inspired some beautiful melodies, and he felt he had to write the music for them all. The friend forgave him, as have all who have since learned to know the songs he wrote to those words.

The Miller Songs tell a connected story, after the manner of Tennyson's 'Maud,' by making each one of the poems the lyrical expression of the hero in his

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successive moods. The hero of Müller's cycle is a typical figure of the German romanticism. He is a wanderer on the face of the earth, a sensitive, introspective man, a friend of sorrow and in love with unhappiness. To us he seems a rather ridiculous figure. But he was taken seriously enough by the Germans of the time, who had good cause to be pessimistic over the disorganized state of their country and their national life. This miller hero is suffering from unrequited love, which was a favorite theme of the romanticists. But, above all, in the spirit of the time, he is a lover of nature. He sees in nature a reflection of his own moods and sorrows. Nature seems to us to be one of the staples of lyric poems—worn to the bone. But, as a matter of fact, nature is a rather recent invention of civilized man's. The Alps were 'discovered' by the poets no earlier than the eighteenth century. Certain early poems, notably the *Iliad*, show a feeling for natural beauty. But the study of nature as a cult, the conscious effort to find moods and meanings in her, is hardly more than a century and a half old. Folk poetry contains very little of it, and then usually only in sentimental connotations. In Schubert's time nature was still a recent discovery and a thrilling one. So Schubert's contemporaries, apart from their pessimism, were able to immerse themselves in such poetry as that of the *Müllerlieder* and the *Winterreise* without feeling the strained preciousness which we inevitably feel in it in our realistic age. As they stood and in their time the *Müllerlieder* were admirably suited to romantic musical treatment by Schubert.

In the first song, 'Wandering,' the hero is happy enough in his simple melodic tramping about the countryside. Knowing Schubert's own predilections in that direction, we feel that he must have put some of his own enthusiasm into the song. In the second song of the series, 'Whither?' he meets a rippling brook, and is

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filled with romantic wonderings and presentiments concerning its destination. Can we doubt that it leads him to his future beloved? He follows it and comes upon a lovely mill, whose wheel is propelled by the brook, simple, of beneficent and sympathetic nature. The wanderer applies to the miller for work and is taken on. Thereupon, in a beautiful song, he pays his thanks—to the brook. In the fifth song, *Feierabend*, he has become as one of the miller's family. He loves, like a true apprentice out of Wagner's *Meistersinger*, to hear the master, at the close of a day's work, say 'Well done!' But most of all he is happy because he has met the miller's daughter.

In the sixth song, 'Curiosity,' he is in perplexity, and turns, as every romantic youth of the time did, to nature for help. 'Does she love me?' he is persistently asking, and he addresses his question to the brook. In the next song, 'Impatience,' his attraction for the girl has become a full-fledged passion. '*Dein ist mein Herz!*' he cries ecstatically. In 'Morning Greeting' he addresses some pretty stanzas and compliments to the miller's daughter. The tenth song is an excellent example, in simple form, of the delicate mood which, as we have said, it is the special province of the art-song to express. The young miller and the girl are sitting together—beside the brook, of course. She gets up and goes into the house, and the tears come to his eyes. In the next song the miller's daughter has accepted and returned his love, and in the following one he is at joyful peace with nature, and is praising the green ribbon which his loved one wears.

But then enters the tragic complication. For we hear a hunter's horn, and the handsome young hunter descends upon the peaceful mill. The miller previsions the meaning of this. In the fifteenth song he is struggling between pride and jealousy. Then he is once more praising the dear color—green, which his sweet-

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heart loves because it is like the fresh green of nature. And in the next song he is cursing the hateful color (the same green) because its wearer is no longer true to him. In the eighteenth song the miller's daughter has given her love to the huntsman, and the young miller has lost hope. The dead flowers (for fall has come) express the state of his heart. These flowers must lie upon his grave. But—when the loved one passes by the grave let the flowers burst once more into fresh bloom. In the nineteenth song the miller holds a conversation with his beloved brook, which suggests to him the sweet suicide which was ultra-fashionable in all romantic literature of the time. And in the beautiful last song of the cycle the brook sings to sleep the dead man by its side.

The poems are all truly lyrical, and invite musical setting. They rise to no marked poetic heights, but are thoroughly poetic and emotional in feeling. Though Schubert did not achieve a uniform standard of excellence throughout the series, the general average is high. The first song, 'Wandering,' has a memorable melody of a simple sort, and the second, which we have mentioned above, is one of his masterpieces. 'Impatience,' though formal and strophic in structure, has an unrestrained sweep of feeling which is rare in Schubert and looks forward to the later romanticists of music. The 'Morning Greeting' is a simple Italianate melody of great beauty, one which is likely to lead astray the singer who tries to give it overmuch 'expression.' 'The Hunter' is spirited, but has no great musical value. 'Jealousy and Pride,' though not very attractive musically, is interesting as an example of Schubert's discriminating use of the simplest kind of accompaniment for precise emotional expression. *Die liebe Farbe*, however, is one of the masterpieces. It is almost French in its thread-like delicacy, but this will prove a pitfall for the singer who has not attained full control

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of the niceties of vocal expression. The formal daintiness of the song is like the allegretto of some toy symphony. And at the same time it is neatly expressive of the playful mood of the words. The contrast of the companion song, *Die böse Farbe*, of course offers a problem to the interpretive singer.

But perhaps the most masterful song of the cycle is the eighteenth, 'Dead Flowers.' This, in moderate two-four time, is strikingly like the allegretto movement of Schubert's C major symphony, one of the loveliest of all his orchestral pieces. The entrancing modulation from an undecided minor to a spirited major on the words '*Der Mai ist gekommen, der Winter ist aus*,' is a touch which any lover of Schubert would recognize as his unmistakably at the first hearing. But don't miss the finer art of this lovely passage, for the joyousness of the major is deceptive; the miller is black at heart over his failure in love, and is only beguiling himself in a passing moment. Notice, therefore, the plaintiveness of the accompaniment on this passage.

'The Miller and the Brook' is an interesting example of the half lyrical, half declamatory style which Schubert sometimes adopts, as we have seen. But the last piece of the cycle is pure song. It is hard to analyze the plaintive character of this melody, and hard especially to understand how the augmented fourth, traditionally considered a harsh interval, becomes at Schubert's hands an instrument of deep emotional expression.

It has often been pointed out that the motive of the brook gives a subtle unity to this song cycle, and that the motive is preserved in Schubert's music. From the rippling triplets of the accompaniment of 'Whither,' the first song in which the brook enters, to the cradling motion of the accompaniment to the last, the brook is almost continuously in the piano part. But, though Schubert's feeling here is extremely delicate, his techni-

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cal means are of the simplest. If it is realism, it is realism of the most primitive sort. We should not be misled by the praise of the 'brook music' in this cycle. True descriptive music, whether for good or for bad, did not enter song until after Schubert. And we should further remember that, although Schubert was indeed the first great composer of the song-cycle, he never gave the form the unity and inner meaning which was imparted to it by Schumann, and which is typical of it to our minds.

The *Müllerlieder* reveal admirably the tender interpretation of sentiment of which Schubert was such a master. But they are by no means songs of a greatness equal to that of his next cycle, the *Winterreise*. The 'winter journey' taken by the hero (Müller again is the poet) is a pilgrimage in search of forgetfulness after an unhappy love affair. Even more than the *Müllerlieder*, it is an essay in the interpretation of nature in terms of human sentiments. The songs, indeed, are little more than a series of parallels drawn between the scene of the winter landscape and the feelings of the hero. They are a personalizing of the weather, a dramatization of the thermometer.

In the first song the hero tells of his lost sweetheart, and sings to the memory of her a touching 'Good-night' lullaby. The second hears the wind playing about the roof of the house, and suggests that even so circumstances play with man's heart. In the third he finds the cold air freezing his tears—thus his very sorrow has become fixed and rigid. The fourth is a vision of the world paralyzed in the cold of winter: his heart is frozen and her picture is blotted out of it. In the fifth he remembers the linden tree under which they spent their happiest hours.

So the songs go, one after another. The ninth is the 'Will-o'-the-wisp' song; he will not be misled by these false lights, for his heart has been misled by such

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beacons before. In the next, 'Rest,' the hero tells how he is so occupied by the pain of his travelling and the pain of his sorrow that only when he lays his body down to rest at night does he realize how tired he is. From this point on the great songs of the cycle are numerous. The thirteenth, 'The Post,' pictures the galloping of the approaching mail coach, with the blowing of its horn. Is there a letter for him? No, for he is alone in the wide world. The post departs—in a minor key. In the fourteenth song, *Der greise Kopf*, he notices that the frost has made his hair white, and he thinks of himself as an old man, and wishes he could be many years removed from his sorrow. In the long and somewhat descriptive song, *Im Dorfe*, he enters a village and the dogs bark at the lonely wanderer; even so the world is strange and hostile to him. In *Täuschung* ('Illusion') he sees a light in the distance, and hopes it comes from a hospitable farmhouse. But, alas! the light was an illusion, like the rest of the things we hope for in life.

Then come five final songs—every one a masterpiece of the first order. The *Wegweiser* tells of the sign-post the hero sees on the road. But there is another sign-post which is also directing him on his longer road and it points relentlessly the way to Death. Yet, in the next song, *Das Wirtshaus*, when he approaches a graveyard, he finds no welcome awaiting: the rooms of this tavern are all occupied. Death itself will not soothe his loneliness. In the next song, 'Courage,' he makes a final despairing effort to free himself from his misery by pure force of will-power. If the snow flies in his face, he will dash it aside. He will laugh loud and merrily. If life is an illusion, he will *make* it worth while. If there are no gods on earth, we ourselves shall be gods. But this mood cannot last. He sees two false suns in the heavens, in addition to the one that has always been there. But they vanish, like



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the two suns of earlier years—the eyes of his beloved. Only one more sun need vanish and blessed night will come for him.

We are spared the suicide which we might expect in the final song of the cycle. The wanderer comes upon an old man playing the grind-organ. He grinds out what music he can, but his little money-box remains ever empty. The wanderer feels the brotherhood between himself and the old man. 'Play my songs on your grind-organ,' he asks. People have suggested that this bit of verse must have come very close to Schubert's heart; for he, too, had made what music he could, he too was alone in the world, and he too found his little money-box always empty.

Of the songs of this cycle at least a third rank with Schubert's best. 'The Lindentree,' with its simple strophic melody, is almost a folk-song among the German people. *Die Post* is justly admired because of the way it blends a mild realism with high melodic and interpretative beauty. *Der greise Kopf* is especially interesting as pointing forward to the more complex and delineative style of several of Schubert's later songs, with its melodic peculiarity of outline and the extreme importance given the accompaniment. In superficial texture it much resembles *Die Stadt* ('The Town') from his last song group.

'The Signpost,' however, is more truly representative of Schubert's genius. The movement of the song is symphonic, much like that of the 'Dead Flowers' in the *Müllerlieder*. Its steady pulse of rhythm avoids monotony by the most delicate of harmonic movement in the inner parts. As the tragedy deepens toward the end of the song the steady beat of the melody continues for whole measures on a single tone. And in half notes a bass and an alto voice move chromatically toward each other through the best part of an octave. The device would be a trick in the hands of a lesser

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genius; with Schubert it becomes poetic interpretation. This wonderful song is abundantly worth careful study; in particular, the harmonic freedom, combined with liquid smoothness of voice progression, reveals the romantic strain in the composer's equipment and something of his peculiar contribution to the development of music's expressive resources.

Of 'The Inn' we have already spoken. The deep and tragic sweetness of it grows on one, impressive as it is at first hearing. This particular mood of tragic sweetness is a pitfall for composers. With any but the genius it is sure to become maudlin. With Schubert it became heartrending.

Such a song as 'Courage' cannot be overpraised. The compressed energy of its movement is not that of animal life, but of moral effort. Human will-power is felt throughout it. The change from minor to major (Schubert to the bone) in the last lines makes the hearer's blood surge to dizziness. It is one of the most difficult songs to sing. For its energy may so easily be taken for animal spirits. It is just the song to 'run away' with the singer. And when once the singer has lost mental control of it it becomes pitiless toward him. The tonic arpeggio of the last line requires ultimate exactness of vocal control. And from beginning to end the least inaccuracy of intonation or accent will be evident to the audience like a black streak on a white shirt-front.

*Nebensonnen* ('Satellites') is of utmost simplicity. It is so unassuming that for a moment it seems all but trivial. Yet this is the tender modesty of great lyric expression. The song is a test of the singer's taste. The least over-sentimentalization of it will make the judicious grieve. A thousand times better to make it too simple and too prosaic than too emotional.

The last song, 'The Organ Grinder,' is written over a monotonous 'drone bass,' imitative of a primitive

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grind-organ. The melody is apparently as crude as the instrument that is supposed to have played it. But somewhere in it one hears—one knows not how—the deep strain of pathos which is one of Schubert's miracles.

The third cycle, 'Swan Songs,' is matter for amazement to every student of Schubert. For its composer, in the space of fifteen years since he first began writing in earnest, seems to have become a totally new man with a totally new musical technique. It is traditionally hard for a musician to change his technique once it is firmly ingrown. The greatest musicians only—Beethoven, Wagner, and a few others—have been able to do it. That Schubert could do it—in addition to the fact that he was thus willing further to endanger his chances of material success—proves the marvellous richness of his natural endowment. When one considers that these songs were written by a man who had just passed his thirtieth year one is 'teased out of thought' with the curiosity as to what he would have become in music had he lived. Some have answered—'the greatest composer of all time.' The speculation is fascinating, and it makes us love our Schubert the better.

The fourteen 'Swan Songs' are written to seven texts by Rellstab, one by J. G. Seydl, and six by Heine. The last fact makes us pause. Rarely has there been so rich a lyric poet as Heine, probably never one who could so inspire song writers. His first book of lyrics had been published only shortly before Schubert's death, and the composer had set six of them before his final illness. Of these six, five are enduring masterpieces. If only Schubert's genius could have been mated to Heine's through the succeeding ten years!

The seven Rellstab songs include the universally known 'Serenade,' the beauty of which is too obvious and too familiar to need further comment. Another

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and greater song of the list is *Aufenthalt*. The speaker's 'abode' is among the rugged cliffs, and he reflects that his sorrow is as unshakable as the eternal rocks. The furious sweep of the song's movement is breathless. Beneath and above the triplets of the accompaniment is always a passionate and despairing melody. When the voice rests for a moment the piano, in marvellous imitation, takes up the strain. The climax, on the words '*starrender Fels*,' is terrific. The final half-declamed phrase is almost Greek in its severe nobility.

Of the Heine songs the best known is *Am Meer* ('By the Sea'). The introductory chords scored in the bass express the impenetrable mystery of the sea. The very simple melody is the essence of moody retrospection. Such a work as this is as supreme among songs as the second movement of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony is in orchestral music. *Die Stadt* and *Der Atlas* show the great importance which Schubert accorded to the accompaniment and the freedom with which he had come to handle it. In *Ihr Bild* ('Her Picture') we have another of Schubert's very simple melodies—and how impressive in its simplicity! Perhaps Heine was never more perfectly set to music than in this instance.

The wonderful *Doppelgänger*, unique among Schubert's works, has already been mentioned. Mr. Henderson is right in his judgment of this piece. It is Wagnerism before Wagner's time. It is the technique of the latter half of the nineteenth century previsited by the genius of a poor and shy school-teacher living in a cheap Vienna lodging. It is a vision and a prophecy.

Of the ballads we need say little. Strangely enough not one of them is of the finest quality, or truly representative of Schubert, except that one which was the first of his songs to be published, and one of the half dozen to be most widely known—the 'Erl King.' It is

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strange, and disappointing, when we consider the perfection of this early attempt, that Schubert left the ballad, one of the most attractive of song forms, to his contemporary, Löwe, a man who had not a tenth part of his talent. 'The King of Thule' is one of the best of the remainder, but it is immensely surpassed by Liszt's setting. The 'Fisher Boy' is charming, but, being in the strophic form, is no contribution to the development of the form. 'The Young Nun,' fine as it is, is too rhetorical to satisfy a true lover of Schubert. In his more declamatory style Schubert often fails even to be interesting. 'The Singer,' to words by Goethe, is workmanly declamation such as any man of talent might have written. The Ossian songs, of which 'Kolma's Complaint' is the best, reflect the somewhat strained verbosity of the words, and fail to convince with their beauty. The same is true of Schubert's setting to Klopstock's scena, 'Hermann and Thusnelda.' Pomp and circumstance drown out the music. For the true Schubert we must leave the larger forms and return to the shorter lyrics, which reveal the composer's highest glory—the greatest beauty in the simplest terms.

## VI

The writing of songs during Schubert's time, and immediately before, was carried on on an amazing scale. It is not unusual to find composers of the time writing thousands of them. These songs have practically vanished from modern song-programs. But many of them were extremely popular at the time, and remain staples in the repertories of singing societies. Not a few of them have become folk-songs second to none in popularity. The simple form of most of these little lyrics almost precludes their having any importance in the history of song development, but it would

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be a pity if they were lost altogether to the student of singing.

The age in which they were written was, as we have seen, the great age of German national feeling. The intense sincerity and manliness of a Körner or an Arndt filled the whole nation with generous sentiments, contrasting with the delicate refinement of the French culture on the one hand, and the morbid introspection of the German romanticists on the other. Patriotic and military songs abounded. It was also the age of the formation of the male singing-societies which have since become such a typical feature of German life, and composers wrote freely for the four-part male chorus, or for the male solo voice. It was also the age of the awakening interest in folk-literature, and German history or legend furnished many a tale for men to sing around the festive board, or for nurses to sing to the children at night. Finally, it was the age of republican sentiment in Germany, the age when an idealistic and naïve nation was still expecting the reigning house to give constitutional government, once the people had freed themselves from French rule. It was a Germany very different from the Germany we have seen since the Franco-Prussian war—a Germany that was less practical, less commercial, less ambitious, but infinitely more simple and lyric. Hence the output of fine songs was enormous. Never was the German genius more spontaneous; never was it more truly German. The songs of the time, which repose by the thousands in old *Kommersbücher*, and have sifted by scores into modern song collections, are the very breath of fresh air and generous spirits.

At the period of Schubert's early activity Weber was the great national composer of the Germans. We have seen elsewhere \* how German national sentiment centred around his music when the German kings turned

\* Vol. II, p. 230 ff.

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traitor and sought to force the people back into an age of eighteenth-century reactionism. His opera, *Der Freischütz*, was a sort of Marseillaise in time of exile for the lovers of German liberty and union. But earlier than this Weber had made himself the chief national musical figure in Germany. His settings of Körner's fiery *Leyer und Schwert* songs had raised him from a hard-working kapellmeister into a household name. The newly formed singing societies took up the songs, and at least one, the 'Sword Song,' has lived to this day. But in addition to these purely national and military songs, Weber wrote a great number of others, all in simple form and in the direct folk-spirit which he mastered as no other composer mastered it before or since. Many of them are sung still. But the great majority have by this time become quite out-dated. We need only refer to one—the charming lullaby *Schlaf, Herzenssöhnchen, mein Liebling bist du*.

Three composers preëminently continued Weber's work as composer of German opera—Conradin Kreutzer (1780-1849), Albert Lortzing (1801-1851), and Heinrich Marschner (1795-1861). Of these, Kreutzer was peculiarly close to the German popular genius. His settings of Uhland's *Wanderlieder* are very fine, *In die Ferne* being particularly worthy of study. Kreutzer, too, was one of the most successful composers of male choruses; his elaborate chorale, *Das ist der Tag des Herrn*, will probably be remembered as long as German music exists. Lortzing and Marschner freely introduced simple strophic songs into their operas, and by these are chiefly known. Their style was as simple as Weber's and the historical development of song at their hands (slight in any case) is in a different direction from that which Schubert took. Their melodies are not inappropriate, but we look in vain in them for any of the close emotional interpretation which we find so abundantly in Schubert.

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But the finest songs of this semi-popular style (*volkstümliche Lieder*) were written by men who have no other claim to greatness. We may mention F. H. Himmel (1765-1814), Methfessel (1785-1869), Nägeli (1773-1836), Lindpainter (1791-1861), and Silcher (1789-1860). These are the true writers of modern German folk-songs. The energy of their music is of an elementary sort which the more highly trained composer rarely equals. They live to-day in every gathering of German students, in every Männerchor, in every nursery. Ten people are familiar with their songs to one who knows who the composers were. But the gifts these composers have left to their people are co-extensive with German culture.

Methfessel is direct and virile, the singer of battles and of the manly virtues of the great ancestors. How compelling is the vigor of '*Stimmt an, mit hellem Klang!*' And what a boiling of the blood is in his fiery setting of Arndt's 'The God Who Made the Iron Grow!' Nägeli is softer and more sentimental. We remember him chiefly by *Freut euch des Lebens* and the charming 'Good-Night.' Lindpainter was less talented, and his songs, which partook of a romantic nature, have almost disappeared. But Himmel is among the greatest. His setting of Körner's 'Prayer on the Eve of Battle' (vastly superior to Schubert's) is one of the deepest expressions of religious faith in all song literature. His 'Ballad of the Three Tailors,' from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, is a delightful example of the typical Studentenlied. And one should not overlook his four songs from *Alexis und Ida*, in which he shows a delicacy of sentiment approaching that of Schubert, though he wrote them some years before the composition of the 'Erl King.'

Finally, there is Silcher, who is to Germany exactly what Stephen Foster is to America. His songs are innumerable, and the number of great folk-songs



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among them is astonishing. The very heart of German music pulses in Silcher. The famous 'Loreley' melody is his, and also *Zu Strassburg auf der Schanz* and the wonderful *Lebewohl*. He is one of the three or four composers in the world who could with any considerable frequency equal the beauty and directness of folk-songs. He is a text for this chapter. Only the student who knows and loves Silcher can truly know and love Schubert.

## CHAPTER IX

### ROBERT SCHUMANN

Romantic music and romantic poetry—Schumann as a song-writer—The earlier songs—The 'Woman's Life' cycle; the 'Poet's Love' cycle; the later songs—Schumann's contemporaries.

SCHUBERT died just before the great artistic outburst which we know as the romantic period. We have seen elsewhere \* how this force grew and achieved expression in Paris, and thanks partly to political conditions spread to all parts of Europe. Schumann, though not at all interested in politics, felt this force in its artistic aspect, as did all other sensitive men of the time. After Schubert, he was the one man preëminently to express the new feeling in terms of song.

Much had happened between 1828, when Schubert died, and 1840, when Schumann wrote his first songs. To put the case briefly, the romantic movement in music had got under way. People had begun to know Schubert's songs and the later symphonies of Beethoven. The pianoforte had grown to perfection and had come to have a technique and literature of its own. The technique of harmony and polyphony had undergone (partly at Schumann's own hands) striking changes in the direction of freedom and expressiveness. The short piece in free form had become a recognized part of musical literature. The national movement in Germany, with its extensive use of the folk-song, had been universally accepted. The travelling virtuoso had become a fixed part of musical life, and the musical centre of gravity had shifted from

\* Vol. II, Chapter VI.

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the nobles to the masses. In short, people had come to look for intimate emotional expression in music, and music had developed the means of supplying the demand.

Since Schubert's time, the text of a song had become a factor of growing importance. Musicians began to recognize that it should be regarded as equal in value to the music. And along with this recognition arose a remarkable group of poets, as we have seen in the last chapter—a group which have supplied German poetry with one of its most brilliant periods. This group we have described as representing the period of disillusionment following the shattering of the dreams of German unity. For a time the hopes of the people had been directed toward the political and social field; what the best literature had expressed was the feelings and aspirations which were common to men. Now that all the fair dreams had been shattered by the selfishness of the courts and the bickerings of politicians, men asked, 'What is the use?' Turning inward to examine their own souls, they produced a delicate lyric poetry which contained just what the art-song of the time needed—the intimate and personal. No grand emotions ring in this period. In the whole list of Schumann's songs there is hardly one whose words could be put into the mouth of a hero. By far the greater portion are pessimistic. What the poet remembers is a beguiling hour in the shade of a tree. What he looks forward to is a smile from his sweetheart. Every man tries to snatch his own small portion of happiness from this life—and generally makes a poor job of it. Nevertheless, a man usually tells more of the truth about himself when he is discouraged than when he is self-satisfied. And in the lyric poetry of the time we get charming and truthful analyses of human emotions and moods. The literary standard is perhaps higher than at any previous period

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(excepting, of course, the work of the giants like Goethe and Schiller). Versification is smoother, form is more pleasing, and words are used with more regard for their suggestive connotations. In short, men are looking at details in this romantic poetry, even as in romantic music.

High above all poets of the time stood Heine. No German poet, except possibly Goethe, ever produced such a quantity of short poems which have become the property of every German child. The whole literature of lyric poetry can show only three or four men who can equal him in brief and direct expression. It was Heine who brought German literature down from the mountain tops and made it inhabit the homes of men. His poetry was no 'mighty line,' with inverted phrasings and high astounding polysyllables. He never spoke the speech of the gods, as did Schiller. He had no use for the paraphernalia of Greek mythology that had been popular in the *Sturm und Drang* period. He spoke a German that easily fits into men's mouths as they converse with their neighbors. Out of this he fashioned poetry. His syntax is as simple as that of the King James Bible (a rare thing in German literature). Each statement is a unit. And so with each of his thoughts and observations. Each comes to us in its simplest terms. Heine's vocabulary (in his poems) is that of a child. His thoughts are those of any callow love-sick youth. His statement is so literal that it seems always to be on the verge of foolishness. He even seems careless in literary art; his lines are uneven, his rhymes the simplest imaginable, his rhythm disordered. Yet beneath and beyond this simplicity is the art of a careful workman, and the charm of a sensitive observer of men. Heine's poems have the true lyric quality in that their real charm can never be finally analyzed. We can only say that beneath those child-like statements of the obvious was the genius of a poet.

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Heine's genius, like that of Rückert, Platen, Chamisso, Kerner, Eichendorff, and other contemporaries mentioned in the preceding chapter, always tended a bit toward the morbid. These poets partook of the common malady of over-individualism. 'It is not good for man to be alone.' The commonest and truest of truths is that man is a social animal. It is impossible for him to conduct his life except in company with others. The stories of hermits who have gone mad with loneliness have an excellent foundation in fact. And just as man seems meant to act socially, so he seems obliged to feel socially. It is a spiritual necessity to think a good deal of others. 'Whoso saveth his soul shall lose it.' The man who seeks to discover all the treasures within him usually ends by finding nothing there. And when it is the literary fashion (as it was in Schumann's time) to look exclusively within one's own soul, the age ends in helplessness with a moan of despair. This condition is implicit in the poetry of Heine. It is, as we have said, never the poetry of a hero. It can console us in our leisure; it can never inspire us in our labor. Yet the fault is not so serious as it may sound. Few people have contracted serious spiritual diseases from Heine's poetry. The very simplicity and brevity of it prevent the reader from taking it too seriously. Read before the fire in the still hours of the evening Heine cannot harm the tenderest soul of a child of twelve. He was too genuine a humanist, as well as too excellent a literary man, to be utterly removed from health. He is a far more harmless amusement than Byron, for instance, just as he was a far greater poet than Byron. He was, of course, taken much more seriously in his day than we can take him in ours. Schumann in particular shows that he regarded his poet as a text for the highest tragedy and passion of which he as musician was capable. Yet even in his own time Heine's influence must have been

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essentially healthy. For he had in abundance two qualities that always tend to keep men in the path of health, simplicity and humor. The mind that can think simply is not wholly diseased. And we need never fear the pessimist who can laugh at his own despair.

### I

Two things preëminently Schumann brought to his songs beyond what any composer had brought previously. First there was an accurate regard for the text. It is not to belittle Schubert to say that he did not show Schumann's accurate regard for the words. Schubert's regard for the text was conscientious and faithful; his melodies are marvellously faithful to the spirit and his musical prosody never does violence to the metre and accent. But Schubert was working under a somewhat different tradition from Schumann. He is more the melodist, pure and simple. His attitude toward musical prosody was somewhat negative; he demanded of his melody only that it should not do violence to the metre; beyond that it could follow its own musical course. Hence, we not infrequently in his songs have such passages as this, from *Die Allmacht*:



This, of course, is in no way reprehensible or violent to the canons of art. But it differs from Schumann's method in that it puts a higher value on pure song—on the mere joyous exercise of the vocal organs. Schumann's attitude toward musical prosody was more positive; he demanded of his melody not only that it should do no obvious violence to the metre, but that it should take pains accurately to fit the minor accents and quantities. He tried to make the text as sung not very different from the text as declaimed. True, he

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sometimes wrote mere lyric passages of melody on an open vowel, like that in the above example from Schubert. But such passages in Schumann are far more rare. And the whole body of his songs shows that he took the text more as his collaborator in matters of detail. His songs are not valuable primarily because of their melody. He has written many lovely melodies, but a large proportion of his songs would be of comparatively little musical value (at least in the voice part) without the words. And his melodic invention, taking his songs as a whole, is far below the exalted work of Schubert. Besides, Schubert's texts, though not generally chosen without discrimination, do not show the same careful selection as those of Schumann. The poems of the latter are carefully selected for the purpose of specific musical treatment, and in consequence seem to have a higher literary value, whether they have or not. Finally, Schumann had the immense advantage of possessing nearly all of Heine's wonderful lyrics to choose from, a fact that in many an instance gave him the opportunity of writing immortal music 'married to immortal verse.'

The second all-important factor which Schumann, over and above Schubert, brought to his song-writing was a matured harmonic and pianistic technique for the accompaniments. However truly Schubert divined the possibilities of the modern pianoforte, just nearing perfection in his day, he never wrote thoroughly in the new style. His chords in the bass were apt to be heavy and thick, his accompaniment is not spread as widely as it might advantageously be, and his inner voices never show the free and sprightly polyphony which is peculiarly adapted to the piano. Had he lived he would doubtless have become one of the greatest masters of the new pianoforte style. But it was left for Schumann consciously and reverently to take up the work. Schumann did not write a single song, for

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publication at least, until he had been working for full ten years for the piano. His first enthusiasm was for the piano. The shattering of his hopes to become a virtuoso forced him to turn his enthusiasm toward piano composition. And in his early years of creative activity he developed the possibilities of the new instrument with all the enthusiasm of his youthful nature. His first twenty-three works, written between the years 1830 and 1840, were almost exclusively for the piano. In them he developed a pianoforte idiom which was unique in its day. With this new and mature technique he approached his song writing. Inevitably he looked as lovingly toward the accompaniment as toward the voice part—some critics say even more so. He had learned how to make the most of the mechanical peculiarity of the piano—its *struck* strings which are incapable of a true sustained legato; he treated the piano, in other words, essentially as a hammer instrument and not as a wind instrument, like the organ. He developed a surprising adeptness at enharmonic modulation, for which the complete piano keyboard is so peculiarly adapted. He learned the full use of the damper pedal—not so much for sustaining chords as for permitting a wide separation of notes. He learned how to make his inner voices pianistic instead of vocal, making them depend wholly on their contour and position (as opposed to tone quality) for their independence. Finally, he had learned how to give each composition a style of its own—a peculiarity of pianistic manner over and above its individuality of musical content. All these qualities of Schumann's piano technique should be kept in mind in studying his accompaniments. They represent a good half of the musical value of Schumann's songs. If the vocal parts of the *Dichterliebe* cycle had never been written the accompaniments would still have a high value as proof of Schumann's mastery over pianistic writing. Without



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an appreciation of the pianistic side of Schumann's vocal work no singer can begin to appreciate the songs; he cannot even satisfactorily sing his part of them. A large share of Schubert's accompaniments can be played satisfactorily by a pianist of slight ability, if only he have the knack of following the singer. But scarcely any of Schumann's accompaniments can be played satisfactorily except by a performer who is an artist at his instrument.

### II

Schumann's songs can be easily divided into two groups. The first, comprising about a hundred, was composed in 1840, the year of the composer's marriage, and of his most fertile and romantic productivity. After writing these, he professed himself satisfied with what he had done (well he might be) and doubted whether he should ever write songs again. His most fervent admirers cannot help wishing that he had kept to his purpose. A dozen or so indifferent songs were produced in the next ten years, and then, from 1850 to 1852, when his mental powers had begun seriously to fail, he turned out more than a hundred. The contrast between the two groups is striking. The first is nearly all genius; the second nearly all mediocrity. At best, two or three songs from this whole later period are worth knowing. Of the first group there is scarcely one which does not show high creative excellence and there are at least fifty of the finest quality or close to it.

By far the greater part of the songs of the earlier period are grouped in cycles. Of these, however, there is only one which contains that most distinctive quality of the cycle, a unified narrative—as in Schubert's *Müllerlieder*. This is the immortal *Frauenliebe und Leben*. Another, the *Dichterliebe*, is closely bound together and primarily intended to be sung as a unit.

Robert and Clara Schumann  
*After a daguerreotype from life*







## SCHUMANN'S EARLIER SONGS

Three more cycles, while looser than the one just mentioned, are like it in being set solely to the words of one author. And another, *Myrthen*, has little beyond a common title for unification. A few other songs have no grouping except that of an opus number.

The first of the songs form a *Liederkreis* (song-cycle), opus 24, words selected from Heine. This is obviously an experimental work, though it contains several fine numbers. *Ich wandelte unter den Bäumen* delicately maintains its mood. Number 5, *Schöne Wiege meiner Leiden*, is pure melody with a simple accompaniment in Schubert's style, one of the most affecting of all Schumann's songs. Sung with a constant and rich legato, and with well-chosen modulations of tone quality, it is immediately effective. Number 9, *Mit Myrthen und Rosen*, is much admired by musicians; it is unlike most of Schumann in giving an unusual lyric freedom to the voice part, but the accompaniment, with its delicate inner voices, suggests what was to come later. The *Myrthen* of opus 25 include some of Schumann's finest. The very first, *Widmung* ('Dedication'),\* is one of the great songs of all time. Such passionate ardor a composer has seldom been able to compress into a few notes. The fine legato contrasting melody, introduced by an impressive enharmonic change, is the purest of German lyricism. The accompaniment, while conventional enough in its relation to the voice part, shows the freedom, and especially the wide separation of notes, which was to flower so magnificently in the *Dichterliebe*. The great danger in singing this song is that of making it sound hurried or 'choppy.' Here, as so often in song singing, the correct tempo is half the battle. Let the singer aim to avoid 'choppiness,' on the one hand, and dragging, on the other, and the correct tempo will come almost automatically, though, of course, no tempo can hold a song together if there is

\* See Musical Examples (Vol. XIII).

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not a firm legato behind it. *Der Nussbaum* ('The Almond Tree') is another immortal melody. In this song the accompaniment enters as a lyric element, as it rarely does in Schubert except in interludes. The half-phrase of the voice with its answering phrase from the piano—this is an effect of striking charm. The supporting part of the accompaniment shows the principle of the simple broken (or 'harp') chord used more freely than had been the common custom. In *Die Lotusblume* ('The Lotus Flower') the novelty in the accompaniment is very different—a slow and impressive melody arising out of the lowest bass notes of the harmonic support.

In these songs we see the piano beginning to sing with the voice on terms of equality. In number 15, one of the 'Hebrew Melodies' of Byron, we see the formal accompaniment very highly developed. It has become quite pianistic, with much figuration, and a profusion of chromatic passings which remind us of Schumann piano pieces. Yet this is a true accompaniment in the old-fashioned sense, and not, as in some of the later songs, an independent piano composition. *Lass mich ihm am Busen hängen* and *Du bist wie eine Blume* are charming examples of Schumann at his simplest. We cannot point out the precise elements of beauty, yet we feel that the music subtly matches the simplicity of the words. In other terms, we see in these two songs that ultimate test of artistic mastery—the command over style. And in these instances the style subsists quite as much in the voice as in the piano part. The great piano stylist of the preceding decade has begun to turn his peculiar gifts to pure vocal music. The grandiose *Talismane* ('Talismans') is perhaps not of high value musically, but it shows the engaging freshness of Schumann's romantic invention. The three Burns songs—'Somebody,' 'The Highlander's Farewell,' and 'The Highland Cradle Song'—are simply melodies

## SCHUMANN'S EARLIER SONGS

of great beauty and are to be sung as such. The last-named offers a problem to the singer in the need of combining the somewhat jerky, rocking motion of the cradle with the calm monotony which overspreads the whole.

The five songs, opus 27, need not detain us. Of the three songs from Emmanuel Geibel the last, *Der Hidalgo* ('The Hidalgo'), is particularly interesting. As an attempt at local color (which was never Schumann's forte) it has no special value. But the vigor of the accompaniment, with its varied bolero rhythm, and the quiet passages on the words '*Die Schönen von Sevilla*,' suggest once more some of the wonderful piano passages of the *Dichterliebe*.

Of the three songs, opus 31, we must note *Die Löwenbraut* ('The Lion's Bride') as a fine example of the larger ballad form. This form Schubert frequently attempted without ever achieving better than mediocrity. And Schumann himself failed miserably at it in his later years. But in the present instance he gave us a model. The declamatory voice part agrees accurately with the prosody of the text without ever quite losing a melodic value. The accompaniment of the first section consists only of occasional supporting chords. It is recitative, but, unlike the *recitativo secco* of Italian opera, it is recitative raised to the status of music. The singer should be careful never to lose the musical beauty of the voice part and at the same time not try to force it into a formal melody. The middle section illustrates admirably a device which Schumann used better than any other of his time. This is the development of a long passage of vocal music from a single phrase. The vocal part in this middle section is scarcely more than the repetition, in many forms and keys, of one short and very lovely phrase. This device is peculiarly suited to the ballad, which, being in constant forward motion, is liable to lose coherence if the



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music does not offer some basis of unification. Schumann used the same device later in his ballad, *Blondels Lied* ('Blondel's Song'), and here with even more poetic fitness; for the phrase on which the piece is built up is that accompanying the constantly recurring refrain of the text and as it develops seems to infuse the whole work with this single burning message.

One more of Schumann's ballads should be mentioned in this place—the universally known *Die beiden Grenadiere* ('The Two Grenadiers'). Technically the song offers little of interest beyond the composer's clever and appropriate abbreviation of the *Marseillaise* at the end. The overwhelming gusto of the ballad is too obvious to demand more than passing mention.

### III

The twelve songs to words by Kerner, opus 35, include several of especial interest. In this group we see Schumann's development of the piano part well under way. Each song offers an accompaniment which is a study in pianistic style. Number 2, *Stirb, Lieb' und Freund*, has an austere polyphonic support, in the style of Bach, suggesting the majesty of some old cathedral. Number 3, *Wanderlust*, is a buoyant and youthful melody, and number 6, *An das Trinkglass*, a fine romantic chorale. Numbers 6 and 8, *Stille Liebe* and *Stille Thränen*, are intimate psychological studies. In the former the sustained bass melody beneath the hesitating treble of the accompaniment suggests the apprehension of the lover who is obliged to wait in silence. The latter obtains a charming effect with the soft repeated chords of the piano part and offers a typical Schumann ending in the intermingling melodies of the close. The six songs opus 36 contain one which has become a German folk-song—*An den Sonnenschein*, a melody which

## THE 'LEIDERKREIS'

concentrates the spirit of dignity and sincerity of German popular music.

In the Eichendorff *Liederkreis*, opus 39, there are four songs of the very highest rank. Number 2, *Intermezzo*, with its soft syncopation in the accompaniment, offers a suggestive contrast with the songs of Schubert and shows how far musical technique had moved in ten or fifteen years. It is the simplest of melodies, but one with a certain atmospheric indecision, strongly contrasting with the downrightness and clearness of outline which Schubert best loved. Number 3 in this group, *Waldesgespräch*, is as lovely a melody as Schumann ever wrote. It might be called a ballad, with its story of the knight who wandered into the forest at night, finding there a lady in distress, attempting to help her, and discovering that he was in the power of the witch, the Lorelei, who lies in wait for strong men. The lovely thirds of the accompaniment seem to spread the mystery of evening over the song, and when the witch announces her identity the music takes on a momentary grandeur that suggests the old tales of gods and heroes. The song is full of fine and expressive effects. But these do not exist in detail; they rather spring unconsciously out of the musical design. The singer who attempts to make the song too expressive is sure to go astray. If it is sung primarily for its musical beauty it becomes of itself a masterpiece of expressive story-telling. Above all, as so often in great songs, a good legato is the first and chiefest of the virtues. Number 12 of the Eichendorff series is the *Frühlingsnacht* ('Spring Night'), with its magical triplet accompaniment. Number 5 is the famous *Mondnacht* ('Moonlight Night'). Here again we have a song that quite defies analysis. The voice part consists solely of a two-line phrase several times repeated. The first three times it closes on the dominant, the last time on the tonic, with a deep and satisfying sense of repose. In

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any but a master hand this form would become monotonous. But with Schumann's mysterious accompaniment it is all magic. The close is peculiarly characteristic. The voice part comes, as we have said, to a tonic close, but the accompaniment makes a false cadence of it and the piano part continues to its own logical ending. The piano part has become utterly organic and independent. Played by itself, it would offer no clue as to where the voice part ended. That deceptive cadence is Schumann's ultimatum to the singer. 'The song is not ended,' he seems to say, 'merely because you have finished singing. The song is the voice part *and* the piano part one and indivisible. If you hurry through the postlude, or belittle it, or treat it as a useless appendage to the voice part, you are no artist. If you consider the voice part more important than the piano part, or yourself more important than the song you are singing, go and give your feeble talents to vaudeville songs.' And for audiences, too, this song has a message: the listener who begins to applaud before the piano part is finished (and there are few even to-day who do not) is no true listener. Let him go and listen to a brass band; he has no business with the art-song.

The five children's songs, opus 40, offer little of interest. But the cycle, *Frauenliebe und Leben* ('Woman's Life and Love'), is undoubtedly the most famous and possibly the greatest song cycle in all musical literature. The poet, Adalbert von Chamisso, selects eight crucial moments in woman's life and puts into her mouth for each of the eight an exquisite lyric, expressing with wonderful delicacy her emotions and moods. The poems are perhaps a trifle exaggerated in the romantic fashion of the time and certainly do not altogether tally with the emotions of the modern woman. But the groundwork of typical psychology is expressed with such persuasive eloquence and such lit-

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erary charm that no one can read the poems without feeling that he has lived through, in some measure, the experience of which they tell.

In the first song, *Seit ich ihn gesehen*, the young girl has just seen her hero; in a moment, almost, she has cast her young girlhood behind her; she feels strange presentiments; she no longer cares for the games of her sisters; she wishes to be alone; the personality of her hero seems to be ever present. In the second song she has come to know him. She makes no secret of her love; she sings it openly; she is proud of it before the world. In the next song she has heard his proposal. '*Ich kann's nicht fassen, nicht glauben*' ('I cannot grasp it, I cannot believe it'), she says, torn between joy and terror. But in the next song, *Du Ring an meinem Finger*, she is apostrophizing her engagement ring and looking at the long vista of life ahead. Number 5, *Helft mir, ihr Schwestern*, is sung on the bridal day. Next, she is in her own home, in the arms of her husband, vainly attempting to make him understand why she weeps when she is happiest. In number 7 she is singing a lively but tender lullaby to her newborn child. In the last song she is singing her grief at the death of her husband. 'This is your first cruel act toward me,' she says to the dead body. She sees before her a life of voluntary loneliness, assuaged by memories of her former happiness.

The music with which Schumann interprets these songs may justly be called psychological. The term 'psychological' is applied freely and indiscriminately to music and usually without justice. Properly, music is far too abstract an art to carry any precise meanings. Yet with the gradual and persistent process of six centuries, whereby certain musical styles and progressions have come to be associated with definite moods, there has grown up a technique which, with a properly sympathetic audience, may be manipulated to express states

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of soul. Whatever this technique is worth, Schumann, in his *Frauenliebe und Leben*, has used it with masterly power. In the first song he writes a simple, timid melody, the rhythmic flow interrupted as though by the hesitation of a fluttering heart. 'Since my eyes first beheld him I seem to have been blind.' The emotion rises. 'I care no more for the games of my sisters. I had rather weep.' Then comes a lovely phrase of tender sweetness. Weeping for love is a precious delight. The broken melody continues. Not until the last bar does the hearer become conscious of its full charm and formal beauty. The second song, 'He, the Noblest of All,' is in a very different mood—proud and exuberant expression. It has a grand lyric sweep which only a fine artistic taste can restrain from a somewhat cheap pompousness. The middle section returns for a moment to the girl's feelings of timidity. 'Turn from me before it is too late,' she says; 'I am not worthy of you.' Schumann has chosen not to interrupt the flow of his song here. To express the more timid mood he employs dissonance and chromatic progression, which finally resolves into the original clear-cut strain. Throughout the symphonic unity of the song is preserved. The third song, 'I cannot grasp it,' returns to the spirit of the first. It is an agitated allegretto movement. The voice part follows the words with utmost faithfulness; it is almost a free recitative, interrupted only by one gentle lyric phrase on the words, 'I am thine forever.' Yet here, again, there is a true melody throughout, and a charming one, but it seems only to peep out from behind the detached notes. The fourth song, 'Thou, Ring upon My Finger,' has much the design and movement of the second, though quieter. In the fifth, too, melody is dominant. In the sixth the composer returns to the declamatory style. Here the delineative music lies chiefly in the accompaniment, with lovely modulations and snatches of melody sug-

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gesting the timid wonder of the wife in her happiness. The voice part hardly comes to an end at all, but fades away on the words 'Thy picture,' while the piano takes up the tale. The next song, the lullaby, musically the least important of the eight, is a simple strophic melody with a broken chord accompaniment. The last is recitative pure and simple. The rests between phrases seem broken with sobs, out of which there rises the heroism of a determination to face life alone and without complaint. The emotional power of those few notes of recitative is beyond description. The stark tragedy of the opening lines becomes clouded over, as it were, with tears, and the music melts into calm grayness as the woman sings, 'The veil falls; I withdraw into myself, where I have thee and my lost happiness.' And then, as the great quiet of loneliness settles down, the piano sings softly the whole of the first song, the early glow of delicate color when the girl first beheld her hero. And we seem to see ahead the years of loneliness softened only by sweet memory.

No group of songs has ever more perfectly achieved the union of words and music. The faults of this cycle on the artistic side are the faults of the generation. People's views of life have changed much since Chamisso set maiden hearts a-fluttering. The notion of the wife as the bounden slave of her husband—a notion only a step or two removed from the theory of the harem—has given place to the healthier view of the wife as one of two high contracting parties. One cannot help noticing in Chamisso's poems how small a part the child plays in the woman's life. And the idea that upon the death of the husband the woman's thoughts should be solely of her own past rather than of her child's future is little short of repulsive. These are the faults of an individualistic, a pessimistic, an over-sentimental age. They are reflected in the spirit of the music. Since then our art, if it has become more

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sensuous, has also become more vigorous. Schumann's work was for an age rather than for all time.

In the singing of these songs the singer must avoid stressing too much the declamatory character of the three slow ones as well as the melodic exuberance of the others. The songs seem on paper to be detached and broken. All the more they must be sung smoothly, discreetly, without undue emphasis. The singer will not go far wrong in following the notes and the time signatures quite literally. Many a singer has been astonished by that old miracle of art—that if the notes are sung as written they will work their own magic. The composer has seen to that. If a song relies wholly on a 'singer's personality,' the composer has failed. So in these songs pure intonation, just rhythm, and careful diction will interpret the poet truly. If the singer finds that with the observance of these values the songs do not express what they should, let him put them aside for a while. As his technical artistic powers grow he will find that the songs have grown along with them. If he is much concerned about bolstering up the song by giving it 'expression,' he is sure to be on the wrong track.

Of the 'Romances and Ballads,' opus 45, we need only notice the spirited *Es zogen zwei rüst'ge Gesellen*. Opus 48, however, is the immortal *Dichterliebe* series, probably the most individual of all Schumann's song works. Here, again, we find Schumann suffering somewhat from the faults of romanticism. To put the case briefly, he took Heine seriously. Heine himself, we cannot but feel, was not so taken in by his own poetry. In addition to the ever-present grin which is in almost every one of his lyrics there is a certain playful quality, as though he were only teasing the sentimentalism of the human heart. If Heine suffered only a hundredth part of the pangs described in his mass of short poems he must have had more love affairs than any one man

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could attend to in three lifetimes. The truth is, Heine was dealing with moods, and Schumann supposed he was dealing with emotions. We see the contradiction to an almost grotesque degree in the song *Ich grolle nicht* ('I do not complain'). Here the poet tells his love that he will not complain of his unhappiness because, though she goes about in diamonds, he has seen in a dream that she, too, is unhappy. This is pretty sentiment and charming playful heroics. Tragedy it is not. But Schumann's music is tragedy of the noblest strain. It strikes an emotional depth which the composer rarely equalled. To such music the Puritans of Cromwell's time might have left their wives and children to go out and fight on the side of the Lord. We have said that Heine has nowhere in his poems written words that might be put into the mouth of a hero. But in this case Schumann wrote music that a hero might have sung. Perhaps if Schumann's sense of humor had been a little more human and a little less literary he might have seen the incongruity. But it would have been an unfortunate event, for it would have cost the world the wonderful music of this song. Indeed, many of the greatest works of art would never have been created if their authors had possessed a keen sense of humor.

Generally, however, Schumann did not make this mistake. In nearly every other one of the *Dichterliebe* songs he found music which was as gossamer, as little fundamental, as Heine's words. To some students they may seem at first cold and pedantic. Certainly they do not draw their greatness from melodic charm. Merely as melodies, few of these songs would have lived to this day. Undoubtedly their first appeal is a technical one—to the musical theorist and the pianist as well as to the singer. But this is by no means to say that they lack poetry. It is merely that their poetry is concealed and reveals itself only to him who has mastered and understood their finer technical appeal.



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Take, for instance, the ninth song, *Das ist ein Flöten und Geigen* ('I hear the flutes and violins'). The rejected lover hears from a distance the orchestra playing for dancing at the wedding of his beloved. The accompaniment is a waltz rhythm, with repeated notes deftly inserted to suggest perhaps the trumpets of the band. The waltz is steady and continuous. It has none of the sensuous softness, none of the simplicity and balance of phrase which we are accustomed to in popular waltzes. It tinkles on continuously, without an opportunity to draw a breath—and hence seems at first glance aimless. Instead of the engaging warmth we expect from waltzes, it gives a chilling effect. And that, of course, is exactly the effect it had on the rejected lover. It is a tinkly, monotonous waltz, perhaps heard through the winter air. The voice has a little half melodic, half declamatory complaint, but it seems almost independent of the piano part. When the voice rests that waltz is still going on, throbbing, monotonous. Now, any indifferent pianist will make a sorry affair of this accompaniment. It demands the most delicate and exact finger work, the nicest regard for rhythm, the most delicate modulating of tone power. It must be played almost without pedal, and it reveals instantly any slip in the pianist's technique. It might almost be published independently as a piano étude. The singer must deliver his part with great delicacy of diction and achieve expression on the most limited scale. The piece has no contrasts. It is so closely bound together that a single omission of a note will spoil the whole design. Decidedly this is not an interesting song to a bad musician. Every detail is a difficulty. If he cannot master it, it remains to him cold and austere. But to him who can master it it becomes a rare delight. Each technical difficulty becomes an expressive quality; the austerity becomes only poetry more delicately refined. The whole is a challenge to the taste of the singer and

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the accompanist. The song, within its limits, is without a flaw.

Much the same can be said of every one of the *Dichterliebe* songs. There is no superficial similarity between any two. Each one uses technical means which are employed in no other. In each the technical means are nicely adapted to the character of the music. Each one of the accompaniments calls upon a different department of the pianist's art. Each is developed, technically, in its own manner and in the manner of no other one of Schumann's songs. In other words, each of these remarkable songs has that thing known as style. Each has a personality as distinct as the personality of one interesting man is distinct from that of another. The accompaniments might be published alone as Essays in Style. Such an achievement marks a development of detailed technical resource hitherto unheard of. From it all later German and French song writers directly derive. Nor must it be assumed that the voice parts are uninteresting or unvocal. Quite the contrary. Only in these songs, as in none that had preceded them, the voice parts are not the songs, nor a small part of the songs; the songs are inconceivable, are non-existent, except as voice and piano parts intimately combined.

Songs 1 and 2, 'In the Wondrous Lovely Month of May' and 'From Out My Tears,' are simple melodies, charming, but little self-conscious, demanding something of the singer's art and learning if they are not to sound trivial. The third song, 'The Rose, the Lily, the Dove, the Sun,' is a technical *tour de force*, an extremely brief and rapid little piece, demanding the utmost delicacy of intonation and enunciation, which might almost be sung in a single breath. The fourth song, 'When I Look Into Thine Eyes,' is a sort of duet between the voice and the piano. Each phrase from the singer is tenderly echoed in the accompaniment.

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The whole melody has a touching simplicity. Number 6 looks austere. Here Schumann's effort to maintain a single style (both technically and poetically) throughout has perhaps led him to dispense with detailed expression. 'In the Rhine, the Holy River,' runs the first line, and the accompaniment depicts the Rhine flowing, ever so slowly and majestically, past the Cathedral of Cologne. And, since he is particularly interested in these songs in homogeneity of style, he makes the whole song flow along to this type of accompaniment. If the singer is chiefly interested in exhibiting his voice, he will leave this song in disgust as cold and unpoetic. But let him beware that his real motive be not the difficulty he experiences in singing it well.

The following song is the famous *Ich grolle nicht* \* ('I do not complain'), which is easily one of the great songs of the world. Accepting the words as real tragedy, we must pronounce the music one of the noblest expressions of emotion in all song literature. The quiet and dignified melodic line of the voice part seems to suggest the hero's stoic acceptance of his fate. The repeated chords of the accompaniment, moving in solemn progression, reflect the calm of a great soul. And the marvellous bass part, moving deeper and deeper down the scale, calling forth from the modern grand piano its most terrible and wonderful tones, till the very soul seems to quiver in response—this furnishes a foundation of grandeur which might have served for a tragedy of Æschylus. But Schumann rarely repeated this achievement. He was a gentle poet or an ardent technician, or, in his later years, a verbose bore, but only rarely, as in this instance, a tragedian.

The eleventh song of the cycle, 'A Young Man Loved a Maiden,' has a simple melody suited to the spirit of the words, supported by a lilting accompaniment admirably unified in style. The next song, 'On the Bright

\* See Musical Examples (Vol. XIII).

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Summer Morning,' is dignified by the device of the continued downward arpeggio in the accompaniment. The thirteenth song, 'I Wept in My Dreams,' is especially interesting. The voice part is almost a recitative, and the accompaniment a sort of orchestral commentary. Sometimes deep chords form the only support for the singer, sometimes little rhythmical phrases tell their message. The whole suggests admirably the effort of the speaker to disentangle his dreams from the mental mist that surrounds them. The fourteenth song, 'Each Night in Dreams,' is one of the most appealing melodies Schumann ever wrote. The last of the series, *Die alten, bösen Lieder* ('The Old and Evil Songs'), is a magnificent example of Schumann's power to put subtle moods into his accompaniment. The mocking spirit of the words, the grandiose strutting of little emotions, the legendary paraphernalia which is invoked by the poet—these seem to be embalmed in this tricky but brilliant accompaniment. The postlude to the cycle is the melody of song number 12, freely developed.

The later songs of Schumann can be summed up in a few lines. There were a few written in the 1840 period, apparently cast aside as unworthy and inadvisedly published later when Schumann's matchless faculty of self-criticism had become weak and dim. Opus 51 contains a delightful folk-like song, 'When I into the Garden Go.' Opus 53 contains the fine ballad, *Blondel's Lied*, already described. Opus 79 is a book of songs for children, containing two or three, notably *Käuzlein*, *Sandmann*, and *Marienwürmchen*, which bring back a breath of the youthful romantic Schumann. But nothing could be more pitiful than the settings which Schumann about this time gave to some of Goethe's finest poems—especially the *Wilhelm Meister* and the 'Western Divan' songs. The settings of Queen Mary Stuart's poems, published in 1852, are perhaps better than the other pieces of the period, especially the prayer, which

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has an appealing melody and much harmonic freedom in the accompaniment. But the ballads of this later period—including Schiller's 'The Glove,' Hebbel's 'Fair Hedwig,' and others—are mere collections of musical bombast. Let us draw the veil. For soon Schumann was to throw himself into the Rhine in attempted suicide, a martyr to the vigorous activity of fifteen years—years, one of which produced the remarkable songs which we have just been studying, by which alone his name need be known in song literature.

### IV

Among Schumann's contemporaries in song literature we may mention his wife Clara, his friend and rival Mendelssohn, together with several lesser known composers—Reinecke, Volkmann, and Jadassohn—and, finally, two important men, Chopin and Glinka. Clara Schumann (born 1819, Clara Josephine Wieck, died 1896) was a talented composer and a virtuoso pianist who worked throughout her married life in closest sympathy with her husband. Three of her songs appear in Schumann's opus 37—namely, numbers 2, 4, and 11, *Er ist gekommen*, *Liebst du um Schönheit*, and *Warum willst du and're fragen?* These songs must be ranked high, for their scholarly command of style and their general finish, though they are obviously not works of special inspiration. The best of the three is probably the second, in which the composer makes extensive use of one of her husband's devices, that of repeating a single phrase in various forms and building up the song as out of a single shape of stone. The last named of the three songs also has a good melody to its credit.

Mendelssohn wrote many songs during his short lifetime and was probably the best known of all song-writers of the forties. But his work in this department has all but passed into oblivion. They are not ambi-

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tious efforts. They make no attempt to strike out new paths; they have no interest in sounding depths of emotion; they are content with the old forms and the old formulas of accompaniment. The best that can usually be said of them is that they are pleasing in melody and faultlessly graceful according to canons of correctness. On the whole, the ones best worth singing are those which are consciously *volkstümlich*. Among these we may name the very beautiful *Es ist bestimmt in Gottes Rath*, opus 47, No. 7; *O Jugend, O schöne Rosenzeit*, opus 57, number 4; *An die Entfernte*, opus 71, number 3; and *Das Lieblingsplätzchen*, opus 99, number 3, words from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*. 'Italy,' in opus 8, and *Im Herbst*, in opus 9, have a very real charm. *Neue Liebe*, in opus 19, suggesting the elf riding through the forest, is about as near as Mendelssohn ever got to descriptive music in his accompaniments. The *Frühlingslied* in opus 71 is by all means one of the best of his songs, showing contrast and depth of mood and rising to a thrilling climax on the words *Bist nicht allein*.

Another song writer of peculiarly Germanic cast was Karl Reinecke (born 1821), friend of Schumann and Mendelssohn and protégé of the latter, who was for thirty-five years director of the Gewandhaus concerts at Leipzig. Reinecke's songs cannot be called great, but they have to a remarkable degree insinuated themselves into the affections of the German people. They are at their best when they are nearest to the *Volkslied*, showing the German genius of achieving deep and noble expression in the simplest forms. We may mention especially the Children's Songs, opus 37, of which the best are the lilting lullaby, *Wenn die Kinder schlafen ein*, and the moving *Gebet zur Nacht*. The essential wholesomeness of his talent is shown in the *Singspiel, Ein Abenteuer Händels* ('An Adventure of Handel's'), of which the very simple song, *Lied so treu*

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*und herzlich*, is typical. His song cycle, *Schneewittchen* (for soprano and contralto with chorus of women's voices), is excellent in its way. The simple prologue is a thing of great beauty, and *Schneewittchen's* song, *In seiner Kammer*, has a charming archaic style, recalling the long and flowing lines of the Minnesong. Salamon Jadassohn (1831-1901) and Robert Volkmann (1815-1883) were likewise successful song writers whose lyric work has largely passed into obscurity. Carl Friedrich Curschmann (1805-1841), a pupil of Spohr, was a prolific and extremely popular writer of songs in a sentimental and popular vein, marked by the sensuous quality which Franz Abt used so richly. An artist of more varied talents was Karl Gottfried Wilhelm Taubert (1811-1891), who held important official positions in Berlin, chiefly in the Royal Opera, and composed numerous songs. The best of these are the *Kinderlieder*, of which the charming 'Lullaby' is still popular.

Chopin's Polish Songs, opus 74, are his only vocal works. They purport to be arrangements of Polish folk-songs, but it is to be doubted whether they are to any great extent popular melodies. Probably Chopin drew freely on Polish motives and rearranged them to suit himself. However that may be, some of them are masterpieces. 'The Maiden's Wish' is well known to concert audiences through Liszt's arrangement of it for piano. The *Bacchanal* is a glorious piece, admirable for an encore number, the simplest of quatrain tunes, but overpowering in its frenzied energy. 'The Spring' is a charming thing, undoubtedly of folk origin, a tender alternation of major and minor which would become monotonous except for its ineffable beauty. 'Melancholy,' a folk-like tune with a genuine Slavic touch, is likewise among the best, and 'My Sweetheart,' which recalls the Tyrolese folk-songs, is well worth knowing. These songs are of the simplest character. The last two of the collection, the 'Lithuanian Song' and

## GLINKA'S SONGS

'Poland's Funeral Song,' are more pretentious—rather like *scenas* than *Lieder*—and in spite of certain beauties are overweighted with pretense.

Another song writer who does not usually find his way into song lists should be mentioned here. This is Michail Ivanovitch Glinka (1804-1857), founder of the national school of Russian music. Glinka was a man of remarkable talent, one who was able to fuse Italian grace, French subtlety, and German solidity into an individual style of his own, and to develop out of it an original native touch which had never appeared before in Russian music. Of his eighty-five or more songs (exclusive of those in his operas) a great number are in the thin and pretentious style of the day. But from a few of them there speaks real genius—the forerunner of the wonderful Russian song literature of recent times. The grand Hebrew Song from the incidental music to 'Prince Kholmsky' is the work of a man in whom much learning could not stifle the personal message. Another song, 'Our Rose,' is in a mixed rhythm which foreshadows the wonderful songs of Moussorgsky, and yet another, a 'Traveller's Song,' makes use of the lively two-four rhythm which has since come to be associated with the Russian Cossacks. The lyric known as 'Ilia's Song' and that entitled 'Deserted Land' both show the personal genius of the composer. We should also mention 'Doubt,' *Meine Ruh' ist hin*, and 'The Lark' as among his best. It is not likely that singers will dig up these old songs for study, but Glinka's distinguished name should not be forgotten in the examination of the wonderful Russian song literature which took its rise from him.



## CHAPTER X

### THE CONTEMPORARIES OF SCHUBERT AND SCHUMANN

The spirit of the 'thirties' in France; the lyric poets of the French romantic period—Monpou and Berlioz—Song-writers of Italy; English song-writers—Robert Franz—Löwe and the art-ballad.

IN another volume\* we have seen what a remarkable wave of literary romanticism swept over France in the late twenties and early thirties of the nineteenth century. There has rarely been an age of more pronounced lyricism, rarely an age which created in a short time so many excellent lyrics. There were a number of fine talents working at this time. The purely literary virtuosity was remarkable. The radicalism of their method was marked, and the strangeness of their product revealed a movement in all the vigor of its early youth. In their insistence on the sensuous quality of words the romanticists of the thirties looked forward to the France of the early twentieth century, with its hazy, indefinite outlines. The early romanticists reduced the sound of words to a fine art. The later impressionists reduced it almost to an exact science.

The central tenet of the romanticists was freedom—freedom from the old classic forms, freedom from a host of conventions which governed the French language in poetry, and freedom especially from the severity and reserve of the classic ideal. To the poet of the Napoleonic age any violence of manner was an error in taste. He shunned it as he would have shunned the smell of garlic on a peasant's breath. To the poet of the age of Louis Philippe any conscious reserve of

\* Vol. II, chapter VI.

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manner was a coldness, a lack of genuine human feeling, an artistic lie. The emotions as well as the artistic sense must be stirred. And they must be stirred both by the picturing of emotion and by the beauty of lovely sounds. We have occasion to notice throughout the art of the nineteenth century an increasing insistence on the sensuous (it cannot be too often repeated). It shows in every department of artistic life. In poetry it is shown in a development of the mellifluousness of rhythm and suggestiveness of word. The French romanticists did for French poetry what Shelley did for English and what Poe did for American. These three qualities—freedom, emotionalism, and sensuousness—we may accept as the dominant notes of French romantic poetry.

High above all literary men of the time towered Victor Hugo. This man, along with Shakespeare, Dante, and Goethe, was one of the greatest virtuosos of language the world has ever seen. Pity only that he had not the genius of the other three! To his time he seemed supreme. But since his death his reputation has been steadily declining. We have come to see how much of his work was only—language. He attained his emotional effects through emotional words rather than through emotional interpretation. He was incurably melodramatic and only his power of language saves a large share of his work from falling to the level of any yellow-back novel or the cheap theatre romance. He attempted to cover the whole of life—to interpret the criminal, the hero, and the child, as well as woman in every one of her moods and states. But through all the work, even the magnificent scenes of *Les Misérables*, the true human touch is somehow lacking. Everything is sacrificed to the great god Effect, to whom alone Hugo offered his most precious burnt offerings. Much of his work was in the form of short lyrics, but it is in this department that his reputation has suf-

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ferred most in the half century just past. The lyric demands a naïveté which Hugo, already famous at the age of seventeen, never had. His lyric poems are always overweighted with their language, always too foreign to the spirit of the folk-poem, which is at the foundation of all lyric expression. They were, however, freely set to music, as was inevitable, and furnish a goodly share of the texts for the song literature of the time.

Lamartine in his lyric work suffered considerably from the disease of the time—over-emphasis. He ranked as a philosopher in his day—much the sort of philosopher which Maeterlinck pretends to be to-day. He had a goodly share of the didactic in his makeup, as Hugo never had (except toward the end of his life, when didacticism became the fashion). As a result we can hardly place Lamartine any higher than Hugo as a lyric poet. But his ardent religious sense, combined with his fine power over eloquent language, made him greatly loved in his day and as a result his texts enter largely into the song literature of the time. Béranger had much more of the true lyric in him. His language was simple, his message popular. He was always more at home in the streets than in the drawing room. In some ways he might be called the Kipling of his time. He appealed to the French sense of national pride, dwelling upon the glorious history of the past and the nobility of the French character with all the paraphernalia of the jingo poet. In particular he resuscitated, or rather created, the Napoleonic myth. The age in which he wrote was a new one, containing few of the immediate conditions of Napoleon's time. A new generation had sprung up, a generation which had not experienced the heartaches and miseries of the Napoleonic wars, or else had forgotten them, and thought of the time only as the age in which France singlehanded had defeated the whole of Europe. Napoleon was no

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longer the epileptic and egomaniac who had shattered the fine ideals of the French Revolution and for his own ambition brought France almost to the verge of ruin. He was now *le petit caporal* who had fought with his men on the bridge at Arcola, had eaten the same food and slept on the same hard ground with his army. The myth was tremendously attractive, and made it possible some twenty years later for a shallow adventurer to become Emperor of France (merely because he happened to be the nephew of the great Bonaparte) and bring France once more to the verge of ruin to please personal and dynastic ambition. In the creation of this myth Béranger's sense of the picturesque and popular served him well. As a lyric poet, apart from the peculiar nature of his subject matter, he would hardly be remembered. The most genuine and most refined of the literary men of the time was Musset, for many years the lover of Georges Sand and Chopin's successor in her affections. His work partook far less of the spectacular than that of his contemporaries. He was interested in interpreting the human soul and he did his work with the most delicate literary art. His inspiration was fresh and creative; his workmanship was finished to the last degree. It is a great pity that he had no Schubert to set his poems to music. A musician of the stature of Musset might have created a distinctive and great French song literature fifty years earlier than it came.

### I

If the right composer had been at hand French song literature in the nineteenth century might have equalled the German, for the conditions seemed to be ripe. But the French musical tradition for many decades was extraordinarily emasculated, and in no department of musical activity did this show so plainly as in the songs.

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With a few exceptions the French songs from 1830 to 1890 show very few qualities of creative vigor. The ideal was suavity and facility. Doubtless there was beneath the smooth melodies a subtlety of suggestion that gave them a certain artistic value, but this quality is peculiarly French, and without other elements of interest the French songs could hardly attain any great international vogue. It is astonishing—the sameness of these songs which appear in volumes, with eternal repetition and rigid convention. The sentimentalism of the period dominates the whole song output. The composers were extraordinarily timid; the melodies followed the same suave line, and the harmonies were the same eternal succession. The tradition of good taste became little better than a worship of the accredited and commonplace.

The one composer who was markedly free of this fault was, of course, Hector Berlioz, one of the most powerful geniuses in all French music. There is little to connect his work with that of other French composers: in many ways he was their polar opposite. A certain love for graceful and somewhat cold melody (a quality he derived from Gluck and not from his contemporaries), a certain clinging to established forms (with very revolutionary content), and here ends the list of similarities. For the rest he carried into his vocal music the qualities which made his symphonies seem so wild and so anarchic to his countrymen. His harmonies were daring in the extreme. His vocal parts were irregular, without balanced phrases, without regular succession and contrast of similar sections, without any of the clearness of outline which is almost the sole virtue in most of his contemporaries. He modulated through any number of keys, introduced dissonance in unheard of quantity, and filled his accompaniment with rich detail to an extent which to the taste of his time was nothing short of vulgar. Through-

## BERLIOZ AS SONG-WRITER

out his work he followed his own whim where other men would have followed iron convention. But, though his songs are few in number and though they contain peculiar difficulties which have prevented their extensive use in concert programs, they have held their place in the estimation of musicians far better than any other French songs of the period. There are no waste places in these songs. Throughout it is the creative musician who is speaking. The conventional melodic phrases and harmonic sequences, when they are used, have a fine sincerity. When the music is unconventional it is stimulating and suggestive. The impression one gets is that of a vigorous, even violent, brain ceaselessly creating, willing to experiment, willing to make mistakes, but always writing what he believes to be his best. His artistic sincerity is shown by the several versions which exist of some of his songs; his richness of invention by the variants in these versions. Most of the songs are highly elaborate and dramatic. Sometimes, as often happened with Berlioz, they tend to the pretentious and pompous. They are never easy to grasp. But each and every one of them is worth a musician's study and the student of singing in particular cannot well afford to let Berlioz remain a closed book to him.

The earlier songs, written before 1830, are in general simple and conventional. At times we feel the young man who has not yet realized his creative powers. But even these early songs have a high standard compared to the sort of thing that was being produced at the time. Before 1830 Berlioz was still under the spell of Gluck (if, indeed, he ever emerged from it) and his conventionality is that of the great master of opera rather than that of the familiar French *chanson*. 'The Dead Shepherdess,' dating from 1827, is remarkable for its classic dignity and beauty. The Irish Songs, in 1829 and 1830, composed to words by Thomas Moore, show

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the surging up of the revolutionary fervor which took hold of him about this time and came to fruit in the *Symphonie Fantastique* that so startled and shocked Parisian audiences. The songs are in the strophic form, as were most of Berlioz's songs, but otherwise they are unusual enough to prove a problem for the singer. They are by no means steady in quality, and doubtless there is evidenced a failure on the structural side, an inability to keep genius within firmly controlled limits. 'At Sunset' is typical. It is irregular and so filled with detail that it tends to become 'spotty.' It is obviously an attempt at atmosphere—at the same atmosphere upon which the recent French song-writers have built their reputation. The singer's problem lies in keeping these details from protruding from the general design and still giving them their individual value. The task of selecting the essential in the song and keeping this to the fore is truly a task for the singer's intellect, that intellect which is called on so little in the mass of French songs. 'Rich and Rare' has much sensuous beauty and is a real problem in expressive singing. 'Farewell Bessy' is altogether lovely. But the finest of the songs is the last, the 'Elegy.' Here Berlioz reaches a height of tragic impressiveness which he never equalled in his songs and equalled only rarely in his symphonic music. The effect of this song in concert is tremendous.

The song called 'The Captive' (three versions of it exist) is one of the best known and one of the simplest. Here Berlioz has been content with a conventional accompaniment and has spent his effort on the melody—an irregular and somewhat arbitrary melody, but one with a certain aristocratic charm which the singer must find for himself. The 'Villanelle' is perhaps the best of all. Here the originality of Berlioz's genius finds expression within very narrow limits. The simple old form is combined with a harmonic energy that is admirable. 'In the Graveyard' is a study in the tragic

## FRANÇOIS MONPOU

mood, unconventional, needless to say, and thoroughly successful. Other songs which deserve mention are: 'I Believe in Thee,' a sentimental love song; 'On the Lagoon,' a slow barcarolle in six-eight time; and 'Zaide,' a bolero that is highly effective for concert use.

François Louis Hippolyte Monpou (born 1804; died 1841) was the recognized song-writer of the romantic movement. He is now little more than a historical fact. In his early years he was an organist and conductor of church music, but his ability was not marked and he drifted looking for something to do. He gained some local fame in 1828 from his three-part setting of Béranger's *Si j'étais petit oiseau* and was taken up in the drawing rooms as a representative of the romantic school. He took the drawing room verdict seriously and turned out a number of songs to the words of Hugo, Musset, Béranger, and others. His songs had a certain popular quality and an effect of boldness which suited the fancy of the romantic school. But his musicianship was faulty and his harmony and rhythm were awkward and unresourceful. After he became established as a song-writer he took to doing operas, some of which are melodically effective and dramatically vigorous.

## II

Italy has for three centuries been deficient in art-songs, but she has produced a certain amount of lyric music which the student will discover and sing gladly from time to time, and a few of her song-writers should be mentioned here. Giuseppe Mercadante (1795-1870) was primarily an opera composer, but, unlike most of the Italian opera writers, produced a goodly number of songs. These are simple and florid, possessed of a certain Italian charm, but on the one hand too thin to rank as true interpretative music, and on the other



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somewhat too operatic to convey a simple lyrical sentiment. However, his vogue was great and he may be considered the originator of the modern Italian song tradition. The continuer of the tradition was Luigi Gordigiani (1806-1860), a peasant boy who showed marked talent for music and carried into his work a feeling for folk-song which was new to Italian music at the time. He was one of the first native collectors of folk-music and one of the first to appreciate it. He is known almost solely as a song-writer, and so popular have his songs become and so firmly have they remained in people's hearts that he has with some justice been called 'the Italian Schubert.' However, we must not be from this led to suppose that he had anything like Schubert's richness of melodic inspiration, musical resource, or genuine dramatic power. His songs are in every case supplied with the simplest accompaniment and in form do not go much beyond the folk-songs which are their model. They have a certain freedom, a development which is typical of the art-song rather than the folk-song. But their materials are of the simplest, and with their technical sameness and their general melancholy tinge they tend toward monotony. Among the loveliest of his songs is *La Bianchina*, a melody of much sweetness cast in the strophic form. *Il Tempo Passato* shows more energy and passion than is usual in Gordigiani. Some of his religious songs are effective, especially *O Santissima Vergine Maria*, which is said to have been admired by Chopin. We should mention also Gordigiani's waltz songs, which are brilliant and effective without becoming cheap. Another Italian song writer, and one better known in foreign lands than Gordigiani, is *Ciro Pinsuti* (1829-1888), whose output was immense. He exemplifies Italian grace and suavity and imparted to his part-songs in particular a beauty which has carried them to singing societies the world over.

In England in the first part of the nineteenth century

## SONG-WRITERS OF ENGLAND

song writing, as we have seen in another chapter,\* was at a very low ebb. The chief output of songs was in the street ballad class and in the slightly superior opera ballad. The ballad opera of the nineteenth century was not that of the previous century, of which 'The Beggar's Opera' was a type. The newer ballad opera was usually romantic, somewhat elaborate, and composed by one musician instead of ten. Of this opera 'The Bohemian Girl' by Michael Balfe (1808-1870) is an excellent example. Three of its 'ballads'—'I Dreamt I Dwelt in Marble Halls,' 'The Heart Bowed Down,' and 'When Other Lips'—are among the best known of household songs. And if we except the omnipresent street ballad and 'occasional' song (such as cheap pæans of triumph over Napoleon) such lyrics were the chief item in English song. Their beauty is obvious to everybody. They deserve their long life and popularity. But it cannot be said that they are an interpretation of their text, as is the case in a song by Schubert. In addition to his opera ballads Balfe has at least one thoroughly fine song to his credit—'Killarney,' said to have been written on his deathbed. Rarely has a conscious composer caught the true Irish idiom and flavor as Balfe did here. Balfe's once popular setting of Longfellow's 'The Day Is Done' is admirably expressive. Sir Henry Bishop (1786-1855) and Julius Benedict (1804-1885) were popular composers of the time, known rather by their operas than by their songs. But of the group only William Vincent Wallace (1814-1865), in addition to Balfe, can be said to have lived. His 'Maritana' is still occasionally performed, and the song, 'Scenes That Are Brightest,' from that work, has a popularity analogous to that of 'The Heart Bowed Down.' But whatever occasional beauties may have lived from the England of the early nineteenth century, we must feel how dead the period was productively. Much of the English mu-

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sic of the time is *gauche* in the extreme, and none of it shows any of the creative vigor which goes to make history.

### III

It is hard to say anything about Robert Franz (1815-1892). All that there is to be said about him he has said in his songs. He lived the most quiet of lives, hindered in his work by ill health throughout most of his maturity. His musical output, if we except a few pieces of church music, consists almost wholly of songs. (He composed 279 in all.) He was not ambitious; his only desire in life seems to have been to do his work well. He had no qualities of self-advertisement. His fame came very slowly and for a long time he was known only among the elect. He was through most of his life miserably poor and the greater part of his energy went to work which was not much better than that of a hack. But he has by this time attained a rank among the greatest song writers of all time. In some respects he is supreme. Probably no other song writer, not even Brahms, produced such a high proportion of great songs or such an even standard of excellence in his whole output. He shows little variation or development. His first songs are as good as his last. All were the best he could do. Schumann, who discovered and 'announced' Franz, as he had so many other notable composers, wrote of his opus 1 in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*: 'Were I to dwell on all the exquisite details I should never come to an end.' It was through Schumann's influence that the unknown and modest musician had his first work published.

When we come to examine Franz's songs in detail we discover an astonishing subtlety and variety of method and expression within the superficially narrow limits he allowed himself. Probably no other song composer save Hugo Wolf has made each one of his songs

**Robert Franz**  
*After a photograph from life*

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## ROBERT FRANZ

so perfectly individual. We find this individuality first in the outline and superficial character of the melody; next we discover it in the technical methods and devices used in development and elaboration; finally, we trace it in all the niceties of ornament and prove the absolute fitness down to the last note. Franz's peculiar success in all this is due, of course, first of all to selection of themes which are very accurately adjusted to the end in view. A poetic melody, an accompanying figure which provides just the right suggestion, and we have the materials for a fine song. In a majority of cases we have the whole thematic material for the song in the first three or four measures. The simple germ is developed without the introduction of extraneous matter, yet without a suggestion of vain repetition. When we consider that the majority of the songs are in the strophic form (and the strophe is usually very brief) we may realize the artistry which achieved utter individuality within the space of a few bars. In other words, the perfection of Franz's songs comes not from elaboration but from selection—the test, as we have so often pointed out, of the true lyric composer.

Franz's melody is likely to veil itself against the first glance. It is always beautiful and well proportioned, but it so persistently avoids striking effects that it is apt to seem colorless. But if we listen with our inner ears we shall find it eloquent. Avoiding the striking, Franz's melody also avoids the obvious and at first hearing we are apt to find it a trifle aimless and meandering. But its continuous subtle deviations from the expected are never without purpose, and never, if we know how to listen, without meaning. Usually, too, there is little or no obvious design, no striking climax point, no resounding cadence. But here again we need only look beneath the surface to discover the most restful and satisfying architecture. Though the emotional color may be almost unvarying from beginning to end,



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though the final note of the voice may not be on the tonic and may glide in the piano postlude, yet we discover that if any note had been changed the whole would have been less perfect. These qualities we find in their simplest form in such masterpieces as *Widmung* and *Bitte*, songs simple as any folk-song yet rich with conscious artistry. Franz's harmony is not radical or striking. It contains practically nothing which could not be found in Schumann before him; we might almost say that it contains nothing that could not be found in the Beethoven sonatas. He is fluent though not frequent with modulation; his greatest radicalism is a stimulating use of altered chords and passing notes. In fact, his harmony is in every way more conservative than that of Schumann; for, whereas Schumann was professedly an innovator, Franz loved best the old German tradition—that of the Bach fugues and the Lutheran chorale.

Franz's treatment of the words is individual. Few song writers have ever set their texts with more conscientious regard for the niceties of metre and accent. Yet it is musical design and not verbal peculiarities which determines his melodic line. The melody is always and beyond all a melody. The perfect marriage of words and music in Franz comes from his selection of melodies which would nicely fit the words in hand. Neither is strained; neither is sacrificed to the other. In this respect Franz is surpassed by no song writer who ever lived. Now and then the melody is so handled as to seem like very reserved declamation, but even these instances are rare. Franz was not a purist in the setting of his texts; he did hold strictly to the 'one syllable one note' principle. Not infrequently he uses the slurred phrase on a single vowel. But we can never feel that this was done out of a careless disregard for the integrity of the text. In his accompaniment Franz is even greater than in his treatment of the voice. It

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is here that his extreme artistry becomes most evident. The accompaniment is always rich, always a thing of value in itself. Usually it would make a perfectly satisfactory musical composition alone. It is so well filled with musical beauties that with a little more emphasis it might overpower the voice part. But always it is kept nicely in its proper function. In no other song writer are the voice and piano parts so perfectly fused. In Franz's accompaniments is shown his great musical resourcefulness. No two are alike. Nearly all the recognized means are used—solid chords, broken chords, melodic figurations over a spread bass, four-part chorales with free passing notes, contrapuntal melodies against the voice, suggestive devices innumerable. But in every case the germ principle is simple and is strictly adhered to throughout. Franz's accompaniments are, as a whole, more polyphonic than those of any other song writer. In the greater part of his songs the inner notes do not serve merely for harmonic filling-in; they are parts of individual voices which are preserved in their integrity. In all these songs there is nothing ambitious or spectacular. But so deeply based is his musicianship that we may say that anyone who knows the Franz songs accurately knows in epitome the whole development of German classical music. Moreover, they are the finest of cultural exercises. For one who has learned to love the Franz songs has learned one of the most precious things music has to give—the art of *listening*.

The germ figures which Franz uses in his accompaniments are almost endless in their variety. Sometimes they are, in a restrained way, highly picturesque. We may point out the triplets in *Was pocht mein Herz so sehr?* the suggestion of ripples in *Auf dem Meere*, the broken accompaniment in *Es treibt mich hin*, the delicate trill which persists through *Ach, wenn ich doch ein Immchen wär*, the long rolling diatonic figure in

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*Meeresstille*, and so on through innumerable instances. The attainment of the most exquisite beauty within the smallest limits may be studied in *Widmung*, *Deine weissen Lilienfinger*, *Leise zieht durch mein Gemüth*, and *Treibt der Sommer seinen Rosen*, the last a remarkable example of a song built up out of the repetition of the briefest of units, yet without monotony. Franz's range of expression is usually limited to the tender and graceful. He has not succeeded in the mood of tragedy or deep emotion. But several of his songs are powerfully energetic, witness *Frühlingsfeier* and *Das ist ein Brausen und Heulen*. The dramatic element, too, is almost entirely absent, though in such a song as *Childe Harold* we have something approaching it. The influence of the chorale, of which traces are to be found in nearly every one of the songs, is predominant in such ones as *Gute Nacht*, *Wenn sich zwei Herzen Scheiden*, *Habt ihr sie schon gesehen*, *Stille Liebe*, *In der Fremde*, *Der Schmetterling ist in die Rose verliebt*, and *Frühling*, as well as others already mentioned.

To name all the Franz songs which are distinguished in musical beauty and workmanship would be to name the best portion of his life work. But we may point out as of especial beauty (in addition to those already named) *Auf geheimen Waldespfade*, *Auf dem Teich*, *Der Sommer ist schön*, *Die Welt ist so öd*, *Im Friedhof*, *Im Walde*, *Für Musik*, *Im Mai*, *Ich hab' in deinen Augen*, *Der junge Tag erwacht*, and *Er ist gekommen*.

## IV

We have seen in a previous chapter how Schubert, having created one supremely great ballad, failed ever to write another. So the task of creating the art-ballad fell not upon his shoulders but upon those of another, Johann Carl Gottfried Löwe, who was born in North

## LÖWE AND THE ART-BALLAD

Germany in 1796, almost at the same time as Schubert, and long outlived the gentle Viennese composer. Löwe wrote a quantity of choral and church music, but he is chiefly known for his numerous ballads, which he made known throughout Europe in his own concert tours and which have pretty well held their own to this day, in spite of serious drawbacks. Löwe's songs were almost solely in the ballad form. To this he gave his best talents, which were marked though uneven. Undoubtedly he was an artist, working with sincerity and reserve in a form which, more than most forms, would tempt a composer to artistic excess. Add to this the fact that Löwe was not endowed with a rich fund of musical ideas (at least from the standpoint of pure beauty) and we must pay considerable respect to the man who stuck to his guns as he did and produced such a sincere and admirable body of work as he did. Löwe's ballads are descriptive in the highest degree. Every resource that the composer has at his command he calls upon to make the scene pictorial and vivid. In his search for effects he stumbled upon many musical devices which must have proved valuable to later composers. His harmony, considering the time in which he worked, is free and daring. His modulation goes by direct chromatic progression to the most remote keys. Dissonance he uses freely for poignant effect. But the great fault is that he was not a melodist. Melody is, of course, not needed in the ballad as it is in the lyric, but none the less the composer who cannot call forth a beautiful melody when he needs it must jog along as a second-rate artist. It is the lack of melody which we miss most in Löwe's ballads. Melody is obviously absent because the composer could not command it, not because he chose not to use it. Time and again he writes what is meant to be, and perhaps was believed to be, a pleasing tune. But too often it is only empty and angular. It was in developing the form and technique

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of the art-ballad that Löwe performed his chief service to music.

Apart from this failing in point of melody many of Löwe's ballads are altogether admirable. He caught the spirit of the ballad as few others have, that spirit expressed so well in Goethe's words: 'The ballad requires a mystical touch, by which the mind of the reader is brought into that frame of undefined sympathy and awe which men unavoidably feel when face to face with the miraculous or with the mighty forces of nature.' Löwe's resource in the invention of picturesque musical formulas is very great. With his fine sense of drama he managed to make his best ballads impressive and moving. In the *Erlking* or 'Sir Oluf' we feel (if they are well sung) that we are living through a great life experience with the characters represented. His *Erlking* is not comparable with Schubert's in loveliness. But it emphasizes the dramatic elements of the poems as Schubert did not try to and probably could not have done if he had tried. The galloping of the horse is represented graphically in the accompaniment. The three characters speak in three different kinds of voice—the father's is quiet and low, the son's high and excited, the Erlking's eerie and unsubstantial. The Erlking's speeches are all in G major and on the notes of the tonic chord. For the effective delivery of the song there are demanded not only dramatic fire and intensity of emotional expression, but the careful differentiation of the three qualities of voice.

One of the finest of the ballads is "Sir Oluf," in which there are four speaking characters and an abundance of picturesque stage machinery. Sir Oluf, riding through the forest on his way to his wedding, is accosted by the elves and invited to dance, with the fatal consequences usual in ballads. Oluf's ride is described in a stirring *allegro vivace* in the introduction, and the dance of the elves is pictured in a charming passage.

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Another of the great ballads, perhaps the best known of all, is 'Edward,' the text being that of the famous Scotch folk-ballad of the same name. (Brahms wrote a piano piece on the subject, and also set the words as a duet.) The dramatic power is gained from the repetition many times over of an incisive emotional phrase. The whole effect is broad and tragic. Among the many others of Löwe's ballads which are worthy of study and of frequent inclusion in concert programmes we may mention 'Henry the Fowler,' 'The Moorish Prince,' and 'Odin's Ride Over the Sea.'

Few composers have given their best to the ballad form. This is a pity, because no single form of poetry has such a universal and direct appeal as the condensed dramatic story in verse. No type of poetry is more difficult to write with sincerity and human truthfulness. The ballad has remained almost as it was in the beginning, the peculiar property of folk-art. It is, on the other hand, the easiest form for a musician to abuse, the one which tempts most to cheap and clumsy effects. Löwe is one of the few composers who has given his best to the ballad form and, while that best is far inferior to what a first-rate genius would have done, it is too stimulating and suggestive to be absent from any singer's cultural equipment.

## CHAPTER XI

### BRAHMS, WAGNER, AND LISZT

**Brahms as a song-writer—Classification of Brahms' songs; the 'folk-songs'; analysis of Brahms' songs—Wagner's songs; Liszt as a song-writer.**

#### I

WHEN we come to Brahms we find perhaps the only song-writer besides Schubert whose truly memorable songs number more than fifty. Brahms' song product is amazing in its richness, its creativeness, its high average of excellence. A modern taste, often misled by mere obvious effectiveness, has pronounced these songs dull. This notion prevails almost universally among the superficial, and many an appreciative critic has joined in the chorus with grudging reservations. The student in particular is likely to be frightened away from the Brahms songs by this bogey of 'dullness' as well as by the very considerable difficulty which they offer to the singer who is inadequately prepared. But in most cases those who accept this opinion have never studied the Brahms songs and have not allowed themselves to become familiar with their beauties. Certainly, even though certain temperaments may admit the charge of 'dullness' against much of the Brahms symphonic and chamber music, the charge will hold least of all against the songs. Here we find Brahms the romanticist, the composer who was master of the art of obtaining sensuous beauty of melody and richly colored harmony. We must never forget that Brahms was hailed by Schumann as the great continuer of the romantic tradition

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for which he himself had fought so hard and so well. If, in his maturity, Brahms came to regard form and artistic control at a higher value than his contemporaries did, it was not because his romantic invention became exhausted. From the beginning of his life to the end he was possessed of a rich fund of lovely musical ideas, and his last works (*vide* the later Rhapsodies and the Gypsy Songs) are even more romantic than the first. Brahms was a 'classic' solely because he chose to be. It would perhaps be truest to say that he was romanticist in his musical ideas and classicist in his treatment of them. However, such bandying of terms only tends to obscure the facts. Let us get to the songs.

Because Brahms worked with more care and reserve than most of his contemporaries, he must be approached with some care by the student. Doubtless, if one unfamiliar with his work turned over his songs at random the result would be somewhat discouraging. There is so much more there than meets the eye that much of his work is certainly uninteresting to the superficial glance. But there are many songs which must make an instant appeal by their sheer loveliness. Let the student who sincerely wishes to appreciate Brahms begin with these songs. Let us make out a provisional list of them. It would include: 'In Strange Lands,' opus 3; 'Rest, My Love,' opus 33; the 'Folksong' in opus 7; 'The Sorrowful One,' the 'Serenade,' and 'Longing,' from opus 14; 'Hey, Bow and Arrow,' opus 33; 'Sunday,' opus 47; the famous Cradle Song, opus 49; 'Remembrance,' opus 63; 'The Lover's Oath,' opus 69; 'Vain Serenade,' opus 84; 'The Virgin's Lullaby,' opus 91; the Sapphic Ode, opus 94; and every one of the Gypsy Songs, opus 103. To call any of these songs 'dull' is rank foolishness. Their beauty appeals instantly even to a listener who is in no wise a technical musician. Sentiment, passion, military frenzy and simple high spirits are expressed in these songs. They are in some



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cases as simple as anything by Schubert, as popular in character as any folk-song. Let the student learn to know and love some of these and he will have little difficulty with the more elaborate songs later on.

The first quality that appeals straight to the heart in many of the Brahms songs is their large element of the folk-song. Many of the lyrics bear the title *Volkslied*, being musical settings of popular poems, treated in the popular vein. Brahms was devoted to folk-music and understood the value of the musical units it contains in such profusion. A large proportion of his music, if analyzed to its essentials, will show the folk-song as its base. His elaborate songs, however abstruse and self-conscious, may be called only a *development* of the folk-song. The development is managed with the consummate art of the trained musician; but the stuff of the song is in almost every case a musical unit which makes an instant appeal. The student is very foolish if he sees only the development and not the beautiful music beneath it.

In a large proportion of his songs Brahms has given the best of his profound musical learning—always in due proportion and without obtrusion of detail. His management of polyphonic parts, in the bass or in the inner voices, is unequalled by any song-writer—save, perhaps, Franz—and his range of expression is vastly wider than that of Franz. His complication and intertwining of rhythms is highly developed, as in his symphonic music. His harmony is often bold, though never at the expense of cogency. Whether he is simple or complex his musicianship is working every moment. It is this, in the last analysis, which we mean by technical mastery. The real test of technical excellence is not the applying of rules out of the harmony book. The real test is a human one. Read or play a number of songs by some second-rate composer—Gounod, for instance. Then take up Brahms' songs. By the time

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you have done thirty or forty by Gounod you are deathly sick of the same harmonies, the same melodic phrases, the same way of placing the parts. In Brahms' songs you will never be allowed to sleep; you are never sure that the conventional thing is coming next. Your interest is not allowed to flag. Brahms is almost never commonplace. But this does not mean that he obviously avoids the obvious, as is the fashion among lesser composers of modern times. It means that his musicianship is so rich and resourceful that he can always find some fitting thing to do that a minor composer would not have thought of. Test out this statement with some concrete instance. Take one of the simplest of Brahms' melodies—the famous cradle song, opus 49. No tune could be simpler. Any second-rate composer would have supplied it with a conventional accompaniment of bass and treble chords. Most composers would have regarded such a song as a trifle to be tossed off before breakfast. But it is evident that Brahms bestows as much care upon this as upon his most elaborate lyric. There is not a single unusual or strained chord in the accompaniment. Yet there is not a measure without its elements of variety and interest. The gentle syncopation, as of the rocking of the cradle, is always present; always shows some motion and variety. Yet the whole song is managed without any straining for effect, without letting the varied accompaniment overshadow the simple melody.

Brahms has carried into his romantic song-writing a classic regard for form. In the more general sense this means that he always observed artistic proportion, giving unity and body to his melodies, and curbing the exuberant imagination which in so many song-writers makes the parts attempt to be more important than the whole. Concretely considered, we find that Brahms nearly always held to the strophic form, seeing his poems as stanzas which could be set to the same mel-

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ody. In some cases, as in his first song, 'Faithfulness,' he treated the last strophe somewhat differently from the others. A few of his songs are *durchkomponiert*, after the manner of Schubert. But in general he felt his songs to be far more musical architecture and less mere running comment on the words. Certainly every one of his songs would be a satisfactory piece of pure music, apart from the text and apart from the special meaning conveyed. His regard for form makes this possible. Sometimes the form is hard to analyze, not coinciding with any set formula, but the sense of form, of architecture, of proportion, of restraint is always there. Some have said that Brahms' songs are mere instrumental compositions with words added. As a final criticism this is certainly unjust. But it has a certain superficial justification, for Brahms certainly had less regard for the words themselves than any other great song-writer. He is not unwilling to force the text into the form necessary to fit the music. Sometimes he consistently and deliberately misplaces accents, as in the first line of the song, *Wie bist du, meine Königin*, which with Brahms' music reads, 'Wie bist du, *meine Königin*.' He is very free with slurred notes and shows not the slightest hesitation in putting two notes to one syllable in measure after measure. The music has its own architecture, derived from formal or melodic considerations and not from considerations of the text. Of course, this is not the result of carelessness on Brahms' part, nor a belittling of the importance of the words. It was merely that Brahms regarded his songs as interpretive music, and not as 'heightened speech.' In this he differed from nearly every great song-writer, and put himself in opposition to the taste of the time. For those who feel Schumann's scrupulous regard for the text this will rank as a fault, a blot on the beauty of Brahms' songs. The student should decide the matter for himself. At any rate, the fact points to the pe-

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culiar interpretation which Brahms' songs demand—an interpretation which involves firm, reserved, controlled modelling rather than minute emphasis on the parts. Out of this regard for the design as a whole rather than from the direct meaning of the details will come the interpretive truth of the song.

Because Brahms' songs represent the purely musical and formal, as well as the interpretive, they are one of the most valuable of studies for the advanced pupil. A singer's art cannot be complete as long as the effective interpretation of Brahms' songs remains a mystery to him. Not to attempt to understand and love them, because of the myth of dullness, is a sin against artistic open-mindedness which no music-lover should be guilty of. Indeed, if we can manage to escape for a time in our souls from the trend of the time toward the spectacular, the sensuous and the sensual, the easy and effective, we shall find in Brahms a song-writer like no other who ever lived, save only Schubert. Brahms has treated almost every kind of sentiment and emotion successfully. His melodies are lovely in the extreme, his accompaniments are an endless delight to the careful pianist; his musical procedure is never conventional yet always appropriate; his music has a wholesomeness and dignity unsurpassed in all song literature. Other song-writers surpass Brahms in certain qualities. But it is doubtful if any, except Schubert, can be regarded as his equal in the combining of such a large number of first-rate qualities and in the quantity of first-rate songs produced.

## II

We may conveniently divide the Brahms songs into two classes—the 'folk-songs,' written usually to anonymous popular poems and preserving the simplicity and directness of the true folk-song; and the art-songs

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which make use of all the resources of elaboration and organization at the command of that master craftsman. Some of the opus numbers contain 'folk-songs' entirely or in large proportion. (Brahms wrote but one cycle in the strict sense, and usually followed no scheme of grouping.) But a folk-like song may appear anywhere in his song output. The type of folk-feeling in Brahms is almost exclusively German. There is scarcely the slightest attempt at 'local color' in the whole of Brahms' music. Even the Gypsy songs, though they somehow attain an exotic flavor, make use of none of the conventional musical formulas of Hungarian music. Moreover, while the 'folk-songs' are distinctly German, they are also distinctly Brahms. The composer never lost his individuality in any single work. The accompaniments to these songs are usually simple, but they are never merely conventional. They show a nice adaptation of the style of the piano part to the character of the melody and of the song as a whole, and continually present unobtrusive elements of interest in detail.

These 'folk-songs' are numerous. From opus 7 we may select two very beautiful songs for special mention—namely, the *Volkslied* and 'The Mournful One,' the latter one of Brahms' finest expressive melodies. Opus 14 is a treasure. 'Before the Window' is a thing of great beauty. 'Going to My Sweetheart' has a humorous touch, which Brahms could get inimitably. But it is very restrained; the melody is so very simple that for a moment it seems almost trivial. The 'Serenade' and 'Longing' from the same group are delightful. From opus 47 we should mention 'Sunday' and from opus 48 'Joy Hath Left Me,' a fine song in the style of an old German chorale. In opus 69 are an exquisite 'Lament' and the delicious song, 'The Lover's Oath.' 'The Maiden,' in opus 95, is a dialogue between the girl and the reflection of her face in the water. The words

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are a Servian popular poem and the music is in an irregular metre which is peculiar to the Slavic races. Brahms' last group of lyrics, the Gypsy Songs, opus 103, are beyond all praise. These eight songs, written when the composer was past middle age, have all the fire and ardor of early youth just awakened to its powers. There is in them a frenzy of animal spirits which befits their Gypsy words. In them we seem to hear the message of that fine Hungarian song:

'Brechen muss das Herz vor freude oder Leid;  
Das allein heisst bei den Ungarn Fröhlichkeit.'

The Gypsy Songs, all in strophic form, are very short. Into a few seconds of melody Brahms injects his musical message. Not a note is wasted. The mood is carried over with perfect accuracy and conviction. The songs are all nicely contrasted. Each might be a tiny movement from a symphony, *multum in parvo*. There is an *allegro agitato*, an *allegretto*, an *allegro giocoso*, a *vivace grazioso*, an *andantino grazioso*, and so on. Each song has a very distinct 'style,' as modern critics would say. The mood is established at the first note and maintained until the last. The melodies themselves are altogether charming. But a mere knowledge of the melodies will not suggest the thrilling effect which these songs make when well sung in a large hall. The startling effectiveness of many of the Brahms songs is the best answer to the charge that Brahms is academic and pedantic. It is hard to select any best out of these eight songs. 'The Nut Brown Lad' is perhaps the most popular of them, but the charm of each is so distinct that a comparison is difficult. 'Three Roses in a Row' is a delicate melody of great beauty. The vigorous 'Hey, Ye Gypsies!' and the furious 'Red Evening Clouds' which closes the series, are overflowing with animal spirits.

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Of the pieces which are more specifically art-songs we must admit a gradual change in character corresponding to the general change in Brahms' music from the 'romantic' to the 'classic.' Of course, this change has been overemphasized in superficial Brahms criticism. It was not so much Brahms who changed; it was the lay of the land. Music became much more sensuous and free and formless. Brahms became still more himself. The revolutionary Brahms of 1850 was a conservative Brahms in 1880. But, undoubtedly, where Schumann expected him to look forward, Brahms chose in many things to look backward—or, rather, perhaps, to look inward. And so we feel in Brahms' music as a whole that it becomes stranger and more reserved as the man matures. He became more interested in the things that had ceased to interest the rabble, and less interested in the things which scores of new and radical composers were beginning to do very well. And we can feel this change in his songs. The earliest ones—in opus 3—are filled with the joy of spontaneous creation. The so-called 'classic' virtues seemed the last things the composer was thinking about. But the songs were in a pretty strict strophic form and their intelligence was at least equal to their exuberance. And it was these formal and intellectual qualities, and not the others, which were to receive the chief emphasis and intensification as the composer matured. To Schumann, Brahms was the continuer of Schumann. To the world he became the continuer of Beethoven.

The songs of opus 3 are filled with physical energy. 'Fidelity,' the first of them, with its accompaniment of throbbing triplets, seems to tap some hidden source of power like a huge dynamo. We cannot see the source but we know there is much more where that came from. 'Love and Spring' suggests certain of the later Brahms qualities and the song from 'Ivan' seems like a shooting arrow in the vigor and directness of its expression.

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The same physical energy is shown in the 'Spanish Song,' in bolero tempo, in opus 6; and the peculiarly rich Brahms modulation is again revealed in 'As the Clouds.' The 'Nightingale' song from the same group is the first to foreshadow the increased technical elaboration which Brahms was later to give his accompaniments. Here the fluttering triplets in the piano are meant to suggest the winging of the birds, but it is easy to see that the purely technical problem which they created had fascinated the composer. And, except for this technical care, such an accompaniment would have overbalanced the melody. The *Anklänge* of opus 7 has an elaborate syncopated accompaniment which shows the continuation of the technical concern; 'The Return,' from the same series, is another example of Brahms' unsurpassed power to pour great energy into small compass. In opus 19 there are two more songs of the highest quality. One is 'The Smith,' to Uhland's words, perhaps the shortest of all Brahms' songs and certainly one of the most overwhelmingly effective. The maiden who speaks in Uhland's delicious poem tells admiringly of her lover, who is a smith and who works all day amid the grime and the sparks. The melody, with that strange and very Brahmsian avoidance of the regular balancing of phrases which seems physically to condense great energy in a small compass, seems a succession of hammer blows. Each note has a ponderous weight of its own, but a weight which is followed by a fine rebound. The accompaniment, which is obviously intended to suggest flying sparks, is magically adapted to the peculiarities of the pianoforte. The short postlude, and, indeed, the whole of the accompaniment, is strikingly Wagnerian, recalling very closely the Valkyrie's cry in *Die Walküre*. Such a detail is only one more proof of the foolishness of the artificial rivalry which stupid critics set up between Wagner and Brahms. The two men were great artists work-



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ing in very different lines. As for their musical ideas, they could almost, at times, have been interchanged. The second remarkable song of opus 19 is the 'Æolian Harp,' one of the three or four most admired of all Brahms' lyrics. This is one of the few that are in quite free form. It is almost a *scena* rather than a song, since it opens with a recitative and is interrupted in the middle with free declamation. The Æolian harp sings in the west wind the lament of a Greek boy who had been taken to a distant land. Here Brahms' marvellously colored harmonies have created a peculiar beauty which quite escapes analysis.

As we come to the more mature work we find the mere animal spirits less frequently in the foreground. We feel more and more the qualities of control and dominant intellectuality. Not that these songs are better than their predecessors, for some of the earliest ones are finished masterpieces which could hardly be improved. Nor (let it be repeated) does Brahms' fund of musical ideas become less fresh or less charming. But the composer had begun to show at their best the qualities which have chiefly given him a place in modern music. The second song of opus 32 is a triumphant justification of this mature Brahms. The song is entitled only with a number, but it can be known by its first line, *Nicht mehr zu dir zu gehen!* Here is intellectuality in song writing at its best. Brahms never wrote a finer song; few composers, if any, have done so. Its popularity may always be limited, but it is surely one of the great songs of musical literature. Here, as nowhere else, Brahms has observed the rhythmic and quantitative values of his text to the last letter. The words, which are in a moody, reflective vein, are treated almost in declamatory fashion. Every rise or fall of the voice finds its expression in the melodic line of the voice part. The tempo is a slow  $3/2$ , and through this winds the melody, now breaking off suddenly, as

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though gasping for breath, now rising sharply, as though choked with pain. If it were pure declamation, it could not be more faithful to the words; if it were pure melody, it could not be more faithful to the spirit. The accompaniment, answering the voice part simply but intensely, and providing a noble bass for the musical texture to be woven upon, shows Brahms' finest qualities of restraint and perfect fitness. Here is a song which is never exhausted. Let the student play and sing it every day, it will still have something to teach him. Hardly less noble is another song in the same group, *So steh'n wir, ich und meine Weide*. Its theme has all the dignity of a great andante fugue subject by Bach. The treatment of the piano part, with its definite melody in the bass forming an answer and a sort of canon with the voice, is superb. We may also mention in this opus number the much overrated song, *Wie bist du meine Königin*, a piece which has doubtless gained its popularity by its passionate fervor, but which in musical beauty and artistic fitness is far inferior to Brahms' best work.

Opus 33 comprises a large number of romances from L. Tieck's *Magelone*. These songs, which incline to be long and somewhat pretentious, do not maintain the high standard usual with Brahms. There are here rather too much sound and fury. We may, however, mention three which are very fine: 'Hey, Bow and Arrow,' a song made of fire and steel; 'Is It Sorrow?' deeply emotional; and the lovely 'Rest, Sweet Love.' From now on we have merely a steady stream of songs with words garnered from here and there, the music of a very high standard of workmanship and the interest often hidden to the superficial glance. Each song has its individuality which must be sought out by the student. A commentary on all the songs would fill many pages. In opus 43 we find the fine song, 'With Eternal Love,' and the barbaric ballad, 'The Song of Herr von Falken-

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stein.' Such intentional crudity as Brahms puts into this latter song should redeem him from any suspicion of pedantry. The 'Magyar Love Song' of opus 46 treats the words with unusual freedom even for Brahms. The same can be said for 'Gold Outweighs Love,' in opus 48. Opus 49 offers us an interesting song, 'On Sunday Morning,' and the famous Lullaby. In opus 57 we have 'Motionless Air,' and in opus 58 'Oh, Come, Holy Summer Night,' both fine enough to be the masterpieces of another man's output, though they are Brahms' second best. 'Twilight Falls,' of opus 59, is a deeply tragic piece in the folk-mood. In opus 63 we have one song which shows us Brahms as the most thorough technician. The 'Consolation of Spring' makes the most elaborate use of syncopation and mixed rhythms, accompanying the 6/4 voice part with a piano part practically in 3/2. 'Remembrance,' from the same group, is worth knowing, and 'O, Would I Knew the Returning Road' is one of the sweetest of Brahms' songs.

In opus 66 is one of the daintiest and most humorous of the songs, a duet to folk-words, which might be sung as a solo—'Have a Care.' 'I Call from the Bank,' in opus 69, is Brahms once more in the generous world of romance. 'The Maiden's Curse,' in the same group, is a fine tragic song set to a Servian folk-poem. It is an interesting question here whether Brahms did not fail entirely to catch the spirit of the words. The maiden, in a dialogue with her mother, curses her lover, who has prevented her from finishing the washing. She hopes he may be hanged (upon her white breast), chained (in her white arms), drowned (in her love), and so on. The point of the song is the double meaning of the curses. Brahms has treated the words as the passionate rhetoric of love. But it is probable that the poem, in its true spirit, is a comic song. The second part of each curse should probably be delivered *sotto voce*, so that the mother shall not hear. In such a

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reading there would be a delightful comic contrast between the coarse hussy which the girl pretends to be and the sentimental love-sick maiden that she is. Brahms makes no sort of distinction between the two parts of the curses and the song in his hands attains a certain tragic intensity by virtue of the girl's defiance of her mother.

In opus 71 are 'To the Moon' and the *Minnelied*, one of the most admired of Brahms' songs. In sheer beauty, however, this is inferior to the lovely lyric in opus 72, *O, kühler Wald*. Opus 84 contains Brahms' most spirited comic song, the delightful 'Vain Serenade,' the high spirits of which make it an irresistible concert number. Two fine folk-songs are to be found in opus 85, a Servian 'Maiden's song,' and *Ade*, from the Bohemian. Opus 94 contains the famous 'Sapphic Ode.\*' Here we find, in the simple melody (as apart from the song as a whole), Brahms' intellectuality and sensuous beauty fused into a perfect whole. Over it all is that fine artistic reserve which Brahms was so master of and which makes the music so fitting an expression of Greek verse. Among others of the later songs we should mention two Heine songs, 'Death Is the Cool Night' and the 'Sea Journey.'

Brahms' songs are as permanent a part of concert programs as those of Schubert or Franz. If they are not as popular in the looser sense of the word, it is because concert audiences are not yet as a whole willing to give the necessary attention to them. For, while the Brahms songs are emphatically not dull, they do demand careful listening. Without doubt their popularity will grow steadily. And this will be the best of events both for audiences and for singers. He who has learned to listen to Brahms' songs will never again be quite so indulgent with what is cheap and facile. And the singer who has learned how to make effective

\* See Musical Examples (Vol. XIII).



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the striking qualities hidden in a Brahms song will find himself equipped with a power and dignity in his work which he could hardly get in any other way.

### III

Wagner's songs are few. They comprise only those written during his early years in Paris, when for a time he hoped to make himself a fashion in Parisian drawing rooms, and those written under the influence of Mathilde Wesendonck in the late fifties, when he was planning 'Tristan.' The former group, being composed at the time when he was writing 'The Flying Dutchman' and being, moreover, designed for a debased public taste, can by no means be ranked with his typical work. The songs it contains are not great. But Wagner's genius was too imperative to blot itself out at any time and these early lyrics show evidences of the artistic energy which was later to flower in 'The Ring.' The earliest known of Wagner's songs is 'The Fir Tree,' written in 1838 in Königsberg. It has little more than historic interest. In Paris he wrote the 'Three Melodies,' which are still occasionally sung and will repay a little study. The lullaby, *Dors, mon enfant*, is marked with a suavity in the melody and a variety in the accompaniment which betray with certainty the touch of the true musician. The second 'melody,' called 'The Rose,' is rather too sweet, but is saved by its interesting accompaniment. 'Waiting' is vigorous in conception and execution. But the best of Wagner's Parisian songs is 'The Two Grenadiers,' composed to a French version of Heine's famous poem, to which Schumann wrote his popular setting. Wagner's method is more dramatic than Schumann's. It gives a much more important function to the accompaniment, which is something approaching the 'orchestral comment' of his later theories. At times the voice part is freely declamatory.

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Throughout it is kept remarkably free from the running comment of the piano. The long crescendo up to the final lines is managed with skill. For these lines the *Marseillaise* is used, as in Schumann's setting, but only in the accompaniment, the voice singing an independent part. Here we have something approaching a true *leit motif* used in a way foreshadowing the later revolutionary music dramas. The introduction of the *Marseillaise* by both Schumann and Wagner must be regarded purely as a coincidence, since the songs, as it happens, were written in the same year.

The 'Five Poems,' to words by Mathilde Wesendonck, are, with one exception, songs of the first rank. This exception is the 'Sorrows,' which is a bit pompous and rings insincere. 'The Angel' is a simple melody with a soft, flowing accompaniment much in the style of the 'Lohengrin' music. 'Stand Still' is a vigorous and dramatic song, combining both the lyrical and the declamatory elements. The two remaining songs will always be masterpieces of the first order. They are regarded as 'studies' for the *Tristan* music and both contain motives from 'Tristan' or harmonic peculiarities which mark them out unmistakably. *Träume* ('Dreams'), the better known of the two, weaves a wonderful sensuous spell about the listener. Its melody is constructed in a peculiar manner which we sometimes meet in Brahms—a sort of telescoping of successive phrases, so as to bind the parts more cogently and increase the emphasis of the whole. The harmony is a wonderful series of melting chords, culminating in ecstatic chromatic modulations on the words:

'Sanft an deiner Brust verglühn  
Und dann sinken in die Gruft.'

The other 'Tristan' song is *Im Treibhaus* ('In the Hot-house'). It contains two of the 'Tristan' motives,

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slightly altered, those of the wounded Tristan and Tristan's longing. The harmony in this song is exceedingly delicate and chromatic—revolutionary for its time. Here the chromatic development toward which composers had half consciously striven for two centuries at last attained a complete development. The lyric must rank as one of the wonders of modern song literature.

Liszt's songs also we may roughly divide into two classes—those of the Paris period and those of the Weimar period. More than Wagner, Liszt wrote his French songs in the taste of the time and the nation. As one of the pets of the capital he was sure to be heard gladly by the Parisians and his wonderful instinct for pleasing made him write naturally in a style which we cannot usually differentiate from the style of native song writers. *Comment!* for instance, is as French a song as though its composer had never travelled beyond the Parisian fortifications. Its sensitive feeling for the words, its delicate use of the accompaniment in the thin French style, mark it as utterly un-German. The most striking of the Parisian songs is *Enfant, so j'étais roi*, to words by Victor Hugo. It is elaborate and pretentious, but it has a good deal of real power. On the whole, however, Liszt's French songs are without the very qualities which make the later German songs so valuable—chiefly the dramatic and the declamatory values.

Not all these German songs are of high rank, though we may select a dozen or so which are the work of genius. The cheapness which so often entered into the rest of Liszt's work, finds its way now and then into the songs, but on the whole this department of his creative activity maintains a higher average than any other. Cheapness enters somewhat into two of the earlier German songs, 'The Fisher Boy' and 'The Shepherd,' both to words by Schiller. The accompaniments are graphi-

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cally descriptive. Caring little for the formal unity of the songs, Liszt introduced the description suggested by the words whenever the suggestion came. In fact, the songs are really declamations for the voice with a running comment in the piano. They are far superior to the longer declamatory songs of Schubert, which were little more than pretentious recitatives; they raise the declamation into real melody and the descriptive comment into real music. But these songs are far surpassed by some of the Weimar period. 'The Loreley,' to Heine's words, is one of the most elaborate descriptive songs ever written. The opening lines are freely declaimed to a suggestive accompaniment. When the description of the Rhine enters—*die Luft ist kühl und es dunkelt*—we hear a lovely 9/8 motive set over an arpeggio accompaniment which strikingly suggests the calm flowing river. The music becomes deeper and richer as the Loreley enters the action. The passage where the fisher is dragged into the depths of the water is treated with free and impressive dramatic power. Then the Rhine once more flows quietly over the place where the man was drowned and the lovely river theme returns once more, deepening into silence as the darkness falls. This song illustrates almost at its best the principle of the descriptive song, the principle held by many that the effect of *the whole* is to be gained by treating *each part* with fidelity. It is interesting to compare this setting with the simple folk-like setting provided by Silcher and universally sung. The latter makes a very regular strophic melody serve for all the stanzas. The two settings are both wonderful and in very different ways. A choice between the two must be a matter of individual taste. It will be a nice exercise for the student to study the two and choose, on personal grounds, between them.

Fine as 'The Loreley' is, Liszt has written two ballads which are finer. His setting of 'The King of Thule,'

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from Goethe's 'Faust,' is almost beyond praise. In this he uses a brief suggestive phrase in the accompaniment which becomes the germ of the whole ballad, being repeated in many connotations and moods. 'The Ancestral Tomb,' to Uhland's words, perhaps suffers just a trifle from the pompous, but is nevertheless one of the best ballads (or, more properly, romances) that we have. The old warrior, the last of his race, goes to his ancestral tomb, in which one stone vault is still empty. He hears the voices of his fathers singing an impressive and mysterious song of family pride. The voices cease and he lays himself in the empty vault and dies. Suggestions of unguessed mystery and grandeur hang over the ballad.

In addition to these larger compositions, Liszt achieved what might reasonably have been considered an impossibility for him—the pure lyric. Some of his settings are almost flawless. Heine's *Du bist wie eine Blume* has never received such fine music at the hands of another composer. The opening and typical phrase seems to contain the essence of the religious sentimentalism of Heine's words. 'Mignon's Song' commences with a phrase, set over an altered chord, which has become famous for its accurate delineation of a mood in a few notes. Perhaps the most impressive of his brief lyrics is *Der du von dem Himmel bist*. Liszt's simple setting of this poem is finer, if possible, than Schubert's. *Ein Fichtenbaum steht einsam* and *Im Rhein, im schönen Strome* present many elements of beauty and interest. But the most typical and possibly the finest of all Liszt's songs is 'The Three Gypsies,' to Lehnau's words. In the poem the speaker tells of having passed along a country road and having seen three gypsies, one smoking, one fiddling, and one sleeping. In the music each of the gypsies is carefully differentiated. The characterization in this song is beyond all praise. The voice part is an eloquent declamation, ris-

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ing here and there into inspired melody. For the basic theme, the theme of the joy of life, Liszt has a magnificent Hungarian melody, surely one of the finest he ever used. The song is one of the most effective of concert pieces.

In spite of his comparatively small output, Liszt's songs are of great importance in the history of song writing. He, better than any other, fused the declamatory and the lyrical—truth to the words and truth to the emotions. He several times struck the grand note as few purely lyrical composers (not even Schubert) have been able to do. In the development of the piano part along the purely descriptive side no composer has gone beyond Liszt.

## CHAPTER XII

### LATE ROMANTICS IN GERMANY AND ELSEWHERE

The dilution of the romantic spirit—Grieg and his songs—Minor romantic lyricists; Peter Cornelius, Adolph Jensen, Eduard Lassen, Georg Henschel, and Halfdan Kjerulf; Dvorák's songs—French song-writers: Gounod and others; Saint-Saëns and Massenet; minor French lyricists—Edward MacDowell as song-writer; Nevin and others—Rubinstein and Tchaikowsky—English song.

#### I

EVERY great burst of genius in any department of art is followed by widespread imitation. The genius (the *seer*, as Carlyle calls him) *sees* his way to new objects and achievements which lesser men are blind to. Before the genius has done the thing, the thing seems impossible; after he has done it, it seems divinely simple. The genius seems to have taught people how. Every second-rate talent can now follow the formula and produce the same results. Of course, the second-rate talent cannot produce *quite* the same results, easy as it may seem. But the first-rate talent (and geniuses following) can produce fine results and can even produce results that are more thorough and more refined, because they are building upon the work of genius. So the impulse spreads. Many men take up the work that had formerly been the unique property of one. The genius has done the pioneer work. The new department of art is advertised by him, made popular, even made profitable. Lesser men can get something like the same results with less sacrifice, less effort. The imitators, in turn, have their imitators. The great initial impulse, as it spreads, also weakens. Fine strokes

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of genius are imitated until they become only formulas. People are familiar with the style and are satisfied with less convincing results than formerly. The art-form may even become so codified and formulated that first-rate men will become disgusted and refuse to give their serious efforts to it. Then the small fry are left in full possession of the field.

Something like this happened to song literature after Schubert. Fortunately, song writing has continually, since Schubert, attracted enough first-rate men to prevent it from falling into a depraved state in all countries at once. But the general course of song literature since Schubert's death has been that of diffusion and dilution up nearly to the end of the century, when the well-developed harmonic systems of the younger composers poured new energy into the form. Throughout the greater part of this time there were first-rate men working—Schumann, Franz, Brahms, and others. But there was also an increasingly great number of second-rate men who wrote charming and artistic songs—songs which we could by no means overlook. And there was also an increasing number of inferior men who gained great popularity on very slender artistic resources. Many of these showed marked individuality, exquisite finish of workmanship, and fine inspiring ideas. They are by no means to be omitted from any history of song. They cannot and should not be excluded from concert programs. In some respects certain of them have surpassed the great masters. It is also true that excellent work, even first-class work, may be produced in small quantities by men who have scarcely any claim on fame. So any attempt, like the attempt in this chapter, to list and describe the work of a number of less important composers must exclude certain workers in the field whose songs are of high excellence. In such a chapter as this the warning must always be given that the list is not all-inclusive. A man



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who is quite unknown may produce work equal almost to the best. The student should, while keeping high standards of judgment, regard any song as innocent until it has proved itself guilty. He should always be willing to recognize excellence; he should always be honestly willing to express his liking for a particular song, be it unknown or despised. Such a chapter as this, we have said, is necessarily incomplete. The student must, in the course of his study, complete it for himself.

After the death of Schumann we see the art of song-writing spreading to every European country which cultivated music at all. Germany, in addition to Brahms, Wagner, and Liszt, can show Cornelius, Jensen, and Lassen among the most prominent. Scandinavia is represented by Kjerulf and Grieg. The French have a long line of well-known song writers, many of them scarcely above the level of mediocrity and not one showing any touch of first-rate talent. In Italy we see a slender interest in song writing, which, however, produced a rather large number of songs, some of much beauty. Russia, in addition to the truly national composers (who will be treated in another chapter), had distinguished song writers in Rubinstein and Tschaikowsky. England, still in a dry formalistic period, produced one true romanticist of great talent—Arthur Goring-Thomas—and several popular writers whose work shows less distinction. And America (if we extend the period slightly for the sake of convenience) shows one song writer—Edward MacDowell—who ranks almost among the greatest. Many of these composers rank now much lower than they did in their lifetime. Others will likely drop more and more out of sight as more recent work becomes known. Tschaikowsky and Gounod, for instance, have been much overrated in the past. A few others, like Cornelius, are not so well known as they deserve to be, and as they presently will be if heaven

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showers discrimination upon singers and concert audiences. In any case, the values represented in this chapter are largely values in transition. Even among these composers, most of whom are dead, there are still reputations to be made and lost.

### II

Edvard Grieg (1843-1907) was essentially a writer in the small forms. His ill health and also probably the cast of his genius prevented him from undertaking labors that called for great concentration and endurance. But in the small forms he is one of the most delightful of the romanticists of the second half of the nineteenth century. He used harmonic color with telling results. He was a master of rhythmic effects. In particular he introduced into his music something of the peculiar folk-idiom of his country (whether he did it in conscious imitation of the folk-songs does not matter). He was one of the first of the distinctly national composers to become universally known and popular. His melody is always engaging; the national peculiarities of it are not so obtrusive or so unusual as to alienate the ordinary listener. He is distinctly easy to enjoy. He was highly successful in the creation of poetic effect, in which he was helped by the provocative unusualness of his idiom. In the musical painting of pictures, in the suggestion of moods that have a sensuous tinge, there were few of his contemporaries who can equal him.

It is evident that such a man would be successful with songs. And Grieg's songs (there are only 146 of them) are among the most delightful we have. Some critics are glad to place him just below Schubert and Brahms. Certainly he shows in his songs a spontaneity, an *élan*, that is one of the prime qualities of the lyrical spirit. Like Franz, he makes his songs brief and to the point.

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Unlike Franz, he takes considerable freedom of form and outline and makes an easy appeal to an unsophisticated public. As an interpreter of moods he is admirable. But his songs have made their popularity probably more on their sheer beauty than on any interpretative quality.

In several of his ballads Grieg has caught a suggestion of the archaic—a certain angularity of melody which is crude yet beautiful. This is typified in 'The Princess,' words by the Norwegian poet Bjørnsen; and 'The Old Song,' words by Heine. But in general Grieg shows that he has little to add to the ballad or the longer vocal forms. He is at his most typical, and possibly at his best, in 'The Swan,'\* words by the dramatist Ibsen. Here he is using harmonic color for all it will yield. In style the song is as far as possible removed from the work of Franz, for it consists simply of a melody with chords for accompaniment. There is scarcely a suggestion of the polyphonic style. The chords, generally in a slightly unusual or altered form, are simply juxtaposed. From their contrast comes the color which is so marked in this song. No other composer, before Grieg, had done this particular thing so well and in point of originality the song can justly be included among the great ones of the world. In *Ich liebe dich*, which is far better known, he is in a vein that is much less fine. Here there is nothing of the national idiom. The song is indeed remarkable for the manner in which it creates emotional excitement in a mere four lines. But through it all there is something of the vulgar. It is not a song apart, like 'The Swan,' but one of the horde.

We must grant it as one of Grieg's distinctions that his songs have a marked individuality and distinction, one from the other, even though this distinction is more superficial than essential. In general scheme, no two

\* See Musical Examples (Vol. XIII).

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of his best songs are much alike. Each has a virtue which is peculiar to it. In 'Solvejg's Song' he writes in a modal folk-style, charming, yet a little more sophisticated than a folk-song would be. 'Autumn Storm' is a good piece of emotional expression, though uneven. 'The Minstrel's Song' shows dramatic power in a compressed phrase. 'The Youth' is admirable in its management of a declamation which is still melody. More items of technical interest appear in 'The Berry,' 'A Fair Vision,' and 'My Goal.' These, especially the last, are all songs of a high order. In 'My Goal' we should notice the vigor which is injected into the whole piece by the composer's harmonic freedom. The handling of the piano part on the *fff* climax is especially typical of Grieg. In 'The Berry' the accompaniment contains a certain sort of free counterpoint, which becomes very effective in the composer's chromatic method of handling it. 'A Fair Vision' (*Was sah ich*) makes much use of picture drawing in the accompaniment, with its glittering introduction and its delicious descending chromatic voice in the bass. The chords of the middle section, very Grieg-like in style, are particularly charming. In 'Friendship' the composer uses unusual chords, again, to express the feeling or the idea of unfaithfulness. The listener will be struck by the likeness of this song to Schubert's *Doppelgänger*. 'The Old Mother' is a simple and very beautiful song, more folk-like even than is usual with Grieg. One of the most exquisite of Grieg's songs, from the standpoint of artistry and taste, is 'Hidden Love,' a model of sensitive writing, in which every note can be heard and every note is in place. The deeply tragic note is not often sounded by Grieg, but in 'By the Bier of a Young Wife' he has achieved it superbly. This song is especially worth study for the extreme freedom of its modulation. The harmonic movement is so constant that there is scarcely any feeling of a change from key to key, but rather a

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sense of moving about in a musical world that is without tonality. The student should also notice the extremely effective use of dissonance. Among the shorter songs we should also notice 'Solvejg's Cradle Song' and the 'Folk-song from Langeland.'

In the long song entitled 'From Mount Pincio' Grieg the picture-painter is at his best. The poet stands on the mount and sees Italy spread out before him. Nature is in a mysterious and lovely mood. The peasants, with their dancing, lend animation to the peaceful scene. And the ancient Italy, the Italy of Rome, rises to his mind. One feels that Liszt should have composed this song, even though he might have made it over-pompous. Grieg has chosen to ignore the suggestion of ancient Italy in his music, using his old musical material to express the new idea. Yet this conservatism undoubtedly has the virtue of lending unity to the song, which otherwise is flawless in point of taste. The mood of mysterious nature Grieg has described best of all in his cycle, 'From Mountain and Fjord.' The prologue and epilogue of this group have a heroic grandeur and yet a sympathetic intimacy which we feel in great vistas of landscape. In the last number in particular the flashes of grandeur seem at times supernatural. In both these songs the declamatory style is masterfully handled. The songs within this impressive frame are short and folk-like and markedly in the Grieg idiom. Indeed, the composer, among his unpretentious songs, has written nothing more charming than 'Ragnhild' and 'Ingebjorg.'

### III

Of the various song writers whom, for convenience, we are here calling 'minor,' there is one who should not be given the epithet without reservation. This is Peter Cornelius (1824-1874), friend and disciple of Liszt and

## PETER CORNELIUS

partisan of Wagner. The work of Cornelius has something of the great strain in it. The man had a fine and daring talent, if not positive genius. His work seems somehow unfinished, without quite enough authority to place him among the masters. It is as though he were making sketches for Parnassus, but had died before attempting the giant canvas. Perhaps he took up music too late. He was a mature man with a profession before he felt the influence of Liszt and devoted himself wholly to composition. Though he was by no means deficient in technical ability, one somehow feels that fate had got a head-start of him—that the truly great composer must become such in his cradle. But those who will take the trouble to know him will find him one of the most satisfactory of the less known German composers. He responded to Liszt's intense and generous interest in music. He had the enthusiasm of the amateur and the energy and thoroughness of the German professional man. He was blessed with the open mind which enabled him to fight for Wagner when the latter was known in Germany only to be despised. He had a keen artistic sense, together with a vigorous and critical mentality which enabled him to use it with much force. And he had what so few composers possess, the breadth of culture and interest which comes from knowing other subjects besides music intimately and well. From his songs one gets the impression that nearly all show originality and creative power, though not many have the final stamp of authority to raise them into a class with the great. From the creative standpoint Cornelius's songs are far superior to Jensen's. But, because he was unable to give his work the same finish of style that Jensen gave to his, he is not, like Jensen, a name known to every singer of songs. Let us go to Cornelius chiefly for stimulation, leaving in the background for the time our sense of form and finish.

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Many of Cornelius's published songs are mainly experimental. He seems to have written what he wrote with much difficulty. It is doubtful if he was often altogether satisfied with the work that left his composing desk. The songs of the 'Lord's Prayer' cycle, for instance, are extremely interesting and impressive in conception, but they nearly always fail in execution. Out of the group only the ninth, 'And Deliver Us from Evil,' is quite satisfactory. But the man's imagination is shown in what he evidently attempted to do in the sixth, 'And Forgive Us Our Debts,' which has a fine fugal bass. The third song of the series, 'Thy Kingdom Come,' is probably next in interest. Of the other early songs we may mention the 'Shepherd's Night-Song,' 'In the Moonlight' (a charming scherzo), the 'Slumber Song,' and 'Think'st Thou of Me?' Of much beauty is 'Come, Let Us Wander,' which obtains a gently colored 'atmosphere' with the simplest of means. And among the later songs there are three fine ones which should be mentioned—'On Molly's Death,' to one of Bürger's famous poems; *Auftrag* and *Abendgefühl*, the last probably Cornelius's best song.

A good part of his work is contained in song cycles, namely: 'Sorrow and Consolation,' the 'Rhine Songs,' the 'Christmas Songs,' and the 'Bridal Songs.' In the first of these, for which the composer wrote his own words (he was a poet of much ability), we find three songs which must rank high. These are: 'From the Quiet Spot,' 'Dreaming,' and 'A Tone.' The second would answer anyone's doubts as to whether Cornelius had the lyric gift. For he has given us here a song which in its few measures can throw magic over our souls. The best known of all his songs is 'A Tone,' in which the voice part is carried entirely on one note, while the accompaniment weaves lovely fabrics of melody around it. This, the only song of its kind which the writer is able to call to mind, might have

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been a mere trick. We can imagine such a song being written on a bet. But a few measures of 'A Tone' will dispel any such notion. For the lyric is a work of art throughout. The water-mark of the second-rate song writer is not to be found in a single measure. Of the 'Rhine Songs' the best is the fourth, 'Fancies.' The Christmas Songs are interesting for the composer's attempt to adapt them to children. The melodies, of the utmost simplicity, have an ecclesiastical ring which lends color to the sentiment. Of the six songs the best is 'Three Kings,' but the whole group is worth knowing for the peculiar vitality of their modal style. The finest and most beautiful of the song cycles, however, is the group known as 'Bridal Songs.' These *Brautlieder*, the words written by the composer, seek to interpret six various sentiments of a young girl at the season of her marriage. They are wonderfully delicate in sentiment and finished in execution. The opening song, 'A Myrtle Spray,' is tender and appealing; the third, *Vorabend*, is in Cornelius's fine half declamatory style; and the fourth, the 'Morning Prayer,' is a deep and noble expression of religious sentiment, one of the finest things the composer has achieved. In these songs we can scarcely complain of lack of finish and authority. These qualities they have, together with inherent beauty and originality. If Cornelius could have written a greater number of songs like the *Brautlieder*, the *Auftrag*, and the *Abendgefühl* we should surely be obliged to rank him among the 'great' song writers. As it is, his work deserves far more general recognition than it has received and we have reason to expect that his fame will spread.

Adolph Jensen (1837-1879) was a much more finished song-writer than Cornelius and a much less vital one. His songs have gained much popularity among singers because of their perfect taste, their fine sense of fitness and perfection of form, and their 'singability.' Some-



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times he attains sheer beauty of no mean order. But in the actual business of expression Jensen's songs do not often ring true. The composer is chiefly at home with the lighter sentiments or with nature in her gentler moods. Pierce much beneath the surface and the expression is insincere. Undoubtedly there was in Jensen a sensitive and genuine artistic nature. But it had neither the robustness nor the spontaneity necessary for the creation of a lyric literature. Jensen's contribution, if he has contributed anything, is a certain refinement of outline. His songs sound much like other good German songs, only rather more timid.

His very first published song, *Lehn' deine Wang an meine Wang*, is known wherever there are students of singing. It has been universally admired for its simplicity and touching sentiment. It has been highly praised for its delicacy of workmanship. But, granted that it was a masterpiece according to the standards of its day, its day is past. Nowadays we are demanding a more positive assertion, a more creative musicianship. Jensen did far better than this in later songs. Some of his vigorous lyrics are admirable, notably the *Bolero*, 'In the Shadow,' 'On the Bank of the River,' and 'Old Heidelberg,' the last an excellent essay in popular counterpoint. The formal often attains charming results in Jensen's songs, witness, 'Mother, I Have Two Little Eyes,' which is a miniature symphony allegretto. But on the whole it is in his nature-songs that he is most at ease. The list of superior ones is rather long—'Murmuring Breezes,' 'Spring Night,' and 'Evening Air' are representative. The *Waldesgespräch* depends more on pure melody in the voice than does Schumann's setting of the same words, and is in every way an inferior song. The Scotch songs have their charm, but are so empty of feeling compared with the fine tunes to which the words are set in their native country that their composition seems a sin. But

**Minor Romanticists:**

**Carl Löwe  
Eduard Lassen**

**Peter Cornelius  
Adolf Jensen**







## EDUARD LASSEN

'Sleep'st Thou, My Maiden?' in which the folk-spirit is purely German, is a charming song. The best of all, however, is probably 'Margarete at the Door.'

Eduard Lassen (1830-1904) was even less pretentious than Jensen in his songs, but rather more genuine and satisfactory. Possibly we cannot call him a true interpreter of emotion, but we must credit him with the composition of many a lovely melody. Lassen was Liszt's successor in the directorship at Weimar and thus lived in a stimulating atmosphere. His songs, which were probably the outcome of moments of play, rather than serious efforts, show both more buoyancy and more elasticity than do those of Jensen. With them we are again breathing the fresh air, albeit a peaceful air. Many of his songs content themselves with being simple strophic melodies, interpretive only in general mood and not in detail. The best loved of his songs, 'Thine Eyes So Blue and Tender,' is fairly typical of the simpler ones. Lassen's setting of Heine's 'It Was a Dream' is more truly an art-song, though its appeal is gained by the simplest of means. 'Whither' has an arpeggio accompaniment which adds admirably to the simple freshness of the song. 'Spring' is furnished forth with interesting modulations, managed with unfailing taste. In 'Thou Fairest Vision' Lassen becomes vigorous and passionate; in 'The Sun's Bright Beams' he attains dignity and breadth within brief space. In considering Lassen's lyrical and melodic style it should be interesting for the reader to compare his settings of Heine with Schumann's—as, for instance, in 'It was a Dream,' *Ein Fichtenbaum steht einsam*, and *Ich hab' im Traum geweinet*. On the whole, though Lassen struck out no new path in song writing, though he enlarged no boundaries and tapped no new fields of expression, he kept his songs on a high plane of artistic genuineness. Among the song composers of the last half of the cen-

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tury who expressed themselves chiefly by means of melody, Lassen is one of the most notable.

Georg Henschel (born Breslau 1850) is a song writer whose present reputation is very far from equalling the high standard of his work. This is perhaps because his songs as a whole show no striking element of novelty. But it is none the less regrettable. For in point of pure merit Henschel must be ranked among the finest song writers of his time. Born and educated in Germany, he has spent most of the working years of his life in America and England, where he has made a notable reputation as singer and conductor. His musicianship is solid and deep, his inspiration fresh and unhackneyed, his method honest and straightforward. He is purely German. In his songs we feel the best traditions of the best song writers, concentrated and amalgamated, but without any element of crass imitation. His songs have the artistic finish which is necessary to give conviction to any lyric work. In mood they vary greatly from that of natural grandeur and religious dignity all the way to the most delicate sentiment and humor. Each of the songs is nicely individualized, both in the musical themes and in the manner of treatment. In them one is often reminded of Schumann, but the solid musicianship of Brahms is equally evident. There are no slipshod songs in his list and few which do not stand on a high artistic level. The accompaniment is rich, but on the whole conservative, acting essentially as a support to the voice, however richly decorated it may be. The general method is strictly lyrical and melodic. Pure declamation enters seldom. The dramatic and the picturesque elements are present, but subordinated to the lyrical. Schumann's influence is continually evident, but Brahms, too, is there with his solid and careful musicianship. Further, we must place Henschel as one of the great masters of the folk-spirit in art-song. His naïveté is

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not studied; it springs from a human sympathy with the fundamental things in music. We have repeatedly mentioned in this book the great test of the song writer, namely that he shall be able to express emotional states in a few notes; by this test Henschel is among the most genuine of lyricists.

Henschel's songs have been published in small groups throughout his period of activity. Many of the groups are in the nature of suites, or at least have some element of unity. We may mention the 'Forest Flowers of Thuringia,' opera 22 and 24; the six songs, *Im Volkston*, opus 29; the *Serbisches Liederspiel*, opus 32, comprising ten songs in a close cycle; the four songs to poems by Hafiz, opus 34; and the three songs from Kingsley's 'Water Babies,' opus 36. Opera 22, 24, 29, and 32 are all largely in the folk-manner and comprise some of Henschel's best. In addition to these and numerous independent songs there are a number of ballads, some of them furnished with orchestral accompaniment, which are among the best examples of this difficult modern form.

The various songs in folk-manner offer a fine study in musical taste and understanding. In the best of them the peculiarities of each text have been caught with such accuracy that any other musical interpretation seems impossible. Examine, for instance, the two 'Love Laments of a Maiden'—the long, crawling, saga-like melodic line of the first, the dignified chorale form of the second. Both are impeccable in point of metre and word-accent. But the utter contrast in musical style shows Henschel's fine discrimination in his treatments of his texts. He catches not merely the external characteristics, but the innermost meaning of each of his poems. Thus when he sets that tiny folk-master-piece, *Wenn du bei meinem Schätzel kommst*, he suggests in his music the varying mood of the lines, but he keeps the song far away from the delineative, showing



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in his folk-like treatment of it that he regarded the poem primarily as a unit—as a *single* play of wit. Songs like *Verstohlen geht der Mond auf* and 'Ladybird' seem quite perfect examples of delicate and graceful song writing. *Mei Schätzerl* is a humorous song which is hardly surpassed by Brahms or Wolf. Another song that is in every way a masterpiece is 'The Miller's Farewell,' a melody purely in the folk-character, with a subtle pathos verging on tragedy. *Der Holdseligen*, one of the best of all his songs, is of a different sort. It is essentially an art-song, though at first glance it seems to bear the cachet of the folk. It is not a whit more difficult or complicated than any of the folk-songs, but there is in it somewhere that element of conscious design that makes the difference. A study of this song and one or two of Henschel's pure folk-songs, such as *Mund und Auge*, will reveal much concerning the sensitive deftness of his art. In the more pretentious art-song Henschel is just as much the master. His 'Morning Hymn,' perhaps his best known song, is of a grandeur rarely to be met with outside of Hugo Wolf. Indeed, in the deeper emotions Henschel is seldom found wanting. His themes are truthful and convincing; his development clear and strong; his musicianship fertile and resourceful.

Among the minor German song writers Alexander von Fielitz (born 1860) has achieved unusual popularity. He is best known by his cycle, *Eliland*, which is, by all odds, his best work. The story of the monk's hopeless love is in itself a groundwork of extraordinary sentimental appeal. Von Fielitz has thrown himself into his task with great sympathy. All the songs are of marked musical value. When sung together, they reveal many lights and shades of rare poetical charm. Here von Fielitz is a convincing interpreter of the emotions. In his other songs he rarely strikes the same level. His themes frequently have no marked

## HALFDAN KJERULF

character and his technique is lacking in resource. Often a mannerism of another composer—Schumann or Wagner—is introduced in a rather obvious way. In short, von Fielitz has hurt his reputation by writing too much and repeating himself too often. In *Das grüne, lustige Waldgezelt* he is fresh and spirited and uses with effect his somewhat manneristic contrasting voices in the accompaniment. The *Mädchenlieder*, to words by Geibel, are delicate and very singable. The Jester Songs, to words by Otto Julius Bierbaum, are fairly interesting; the best being 'The Melancholy Fool.' Among the best of his songs are *Nachruf*, with its stimulating inner voices, and *Wehmuth*, which is an excellent study in emotional climax. His settings of the Tuscan Popular Poems by Gregorovius and of the Modern Greek Folk-songs by Geibel often show marked grace and charm. But on the whole we search in vain in his songs for the genius-touch that proclaims the master.

An early song writer of Norway, who, because of the character of his work, can properly be named here, is Halfdan Kjerulf (1818-1868). He was not of the line of Schubert. His songs, which are very numerous, content themselves with a vague sentimental charm. But, though he did nothing to advance the art-song, the man was an artist. His melodies have had great popularity and are perhaps known better to the man in the street than to the professional singer. His 'Last Night' has become a folk-song the world over. From the artistic point of view the 'Love Sermon' is perhaps the best. 'Synnöve's Song' and 'Little Uenevil' have all the genuineness of the folk-song and all the sureness of the art-song, a combination which many a composer might envy. 'The Mother at the Cradle' is a touching melody, with a delicate second melody in the accompaniment. 'I Journeyed over the Sea' is a fine ballad, simple and genuine, and *Abendstimmung* and 'God Knows where

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He Wanders' are songs well worth knowing. In some of these lyrics Kjerulf is no more an art-song composer than Stephen Foster. But throughout he shows that he is a musician and a man of fine taste, and within its narrow limits much of his work is admirable.

Anton Dvořák (1841-1904), the greatest of the Bohemian composers, was known to the world chiefly through his orchestral, operatic, and choral works. He, however, published a few groups of songs which reveal his individual qualities—rich and somewhat Slavic melody, sound musicianship, and captivating resourcefulness in many-colored modulation. The songs have not proved sufficiently numerous or sufficiently strong to hold a permanent place on concert programs. There are, however, a number of charming ones among them, especially the 'Gypsy Songs,' which have the dash of the Brahms *Zigeunerlieder*, and in addition more emotional color and more national characteristics. We should also mention in Germany Eric Meyer-Helmund (born 1861), represented by 'A Maiden's Wish'; Joachim Raff (1822-1882) with his charming 'Serenade'; and Gustav Graben-Hoffmann (1820-1900) with 'Five Hundred Thousand Devils.'

Worthy of somewhat more detailed notice is August Bungert (born 1846), who has recently become more generally known, in Germany at least, for works of larger calibre, but whose rather over-pretentious ambition in attempting to out-do Wagner in a musico-dramatic tetralogy, *Homerische Welt*, has made him appear somewhat ridiculous. Many of his songs, which show the hand of the technically proficient musician, are set to words by Carmen Sylva ('Songs of a Queen,' etc.). Perhaps his best vein is shown in the simple, folk-like setting of *Ich hab' ein kleines Lied erdacht*, which combines a genuine naïve feeling with fine workmanship and spontaneous lyric charm.

## FRENCH SONG-WRITERS

### IV

In France, we have said, a multitude of songs were produced after Schubert had set the fashion. They began, as we have seen, with Monpou and Berlioz. But with the exception of the latter we have not a single original and authoritative voice in French song writing until the time of Fauré, Debussy, and the later César Franck. The French song tradition, derived from the French aria, was indeed distinctive. But it was badly fitted for intimate interpretation, being cold in spirit and thin in workmanship. The best that can be said about this tradition is that it observed a fine economy of means, never using a note that could not be heard and that did not make its effect. But in the truer sense the tradition was not economical, for it failed to get out of its potential resources one tenth of the expressive service it might have had. The French composers were too much occupied with the beauty of their melodic line, which is so all-important that the accompaniment is very frequently no more than a reduplication of the voice part in the treble, with a few thin and misplaced chords added. Nor has this overshadowing melody any of the warmth of an Italian tune; on the contrary it is so cold and self-conscious that it seems to have been put down note by note after a consultation with a book of rules. Anything like fertility of polyphonic invention in the accompaniment is not to be found in the works of this tradition. All the art is to be expended on the singer's part. Undoubtedly this offers considerable exercise to the singer's intelligence, for due proportion of outline and of nuance must be preserved. But the songs from this period which offer any possibilities to the finer interpretive ability of the artist can be numbered on the fingers of one hand.

Charles Gounod (1818-1893) was unquestionably a

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man of great talent. But he abused it miserably. The composer of 'Faust' should have left his mark deeply on French art. He only added one or two successful operas to it. His songs show his talent in its picturesque and variety. But they also show with terrible plainness its abuse. It seems safe to say that there are not half a dozen of them which a self-respecting singer can study. On the whole, Gounod is best in his songs where he is least pretentious—namely, in the little serenade, 'Sing, Laugh, Sleep,' which without grudging we may call utterly charming. The Barcarolle, *Ou voulez-vous aller*, may also be included among the excellent ones. Then comes a large collection of sentimental or emotional songs which seem beneath a musician's notice—songs such as *A la Brise*, *Mignon*, or the well known 'Oh, That We Two Were Maying.' The last is in a screaming sentimental style which has fortunately died, except in the vaudeville houses of England. Some of the concert pieces—like the Arabian song 'Medje,' or the waltz, *O légère hirondelle*—are frankly cheap and undeniably effective. Another class of songs on which Gounod made a glittering reputation was the religious. One of them, which is quite the best, set a whole fashion for grandiose lyrics exploiting what might be called 'popular religion.' This song, 'Nazareth,' has its marked beauties and doubtless should not be held responsible for the fruits it produced, especially in England. Yet even apart from the consideration of ultimate results we cannot help feeling that this beautiful song represents a rather theatrical type of religion. And the other songs are consistently worse. *L'ange Gardien* and *La salutation angélique* have their beauties, but smell much of the theatre. Others of the religious songs, like 'There Is a Green Hill Far Away' and *Temple, ouvre-toi*, are execrable.

Two other opera composers who failed to gain Gounod's reputation as a song-writer worked with more

## THOMAS AND BIZET

consistent artistic conscience. Ambroise Thomas (1811-1896), composer of 'Mignon,' published a number of songs, notably the six Italian songs written during his residence as a *Prix de Rome* scholar in Italy. His part-songs for men's voices also gained great popularity because of their spirited treatment. Georges Bizet (1838-1875) was a man of far finer mettle than either of the two we have named. His numerous songs show as high a standard of excellence and almost as high an average of creativeness as the work of any song writer between Berlioz and Fauré. The best and most popular of them is the *Pastorale*. Another excellent lyric is *Après l'hiver*. In the *Sérénade* and *Ouvre ton cœur* we find a suggestion of the exotic color which was popular in Paris at the time. *Je n'en dirai rien* illustrates Bizet's aptitude at the imitation of the antique, and *Qui donc l'aimera mieux* is an interesting and altogether charming trick song for an agile soprano. Among the other songs which are well worth knowing are *Rêve de la bien-aimée*, *Ma vie a son secret*, *Douce mer*, and *N'oublions pas!*

Félicien David (1810-1876), who initiated in Paris the vogue of the exotic, maintained the fashion as best he could in his songs, which show a talent for the picturesque and striking and no small amount of musicianship. The best of his songs is doubtless *Les Hirondelles*, which adds to a charming simple melody an accompaniment full of picturesque ornamentation.

Camille Saint-Saëns (born 1835), an admirably solid force in French musical life on the whole, has in his songs added nothing of importance to the literature of his time. It is regrettable that he could not here have shown his acquaintance with the great German masters as he did in chamber and orchestral music. Ten songs or so will suggest the character of his work. We find, in addition to the 'cold melodic line' of which we have

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spoken, a growing use of dissonance in the later songs, for emotional or 'psychological' effect. If this tendency had been in any way original to Saint-Saëns and his fellows, or if it had been developed in a distinctive fashion, it would have constituted a real claim to fame, for this is precisely the most marked characteristic of the fine modern French song literature. As it is, in such a song as *Tristesse* we must regard the use of dissonance as a 'looking forward' to modern times, but in scarcely more than an accidental way. Undoubtedly Saint-Saëns used his dissonance deliberately and not accidentally, but the entrance of this feature into French song as a whole was scarcely more than accidental. *Suzette et Suzon* is an example of what the French are likely to do very well—the imitation of the antique. This song has a marked charm and there are many more like it in the literature of the time. *Le Sommeil des Fleurs* may stand as an example of the French emphasis on melody (at the time) and the effect which they could derive from it. In *La Cloche* we see an effort after color and picture painting, though it is but weak and conventional. *Le Pas d'armes du Roi Jeanito*, to Hugo's words, is a ballad of some spirit and attempted color. All these songs are filled with banalities and carelessness of writing. Much more carefully and creatively written is *Clair de Lune*, which tries an interesting experiment with accents. The accents of the voice part all seem to be misplaced, since they do not coincide with those of the accompaniment. In reality both parts receive equal emphasis in the accents, or rather there are no accents at all. The composer's way of writing the song merely emphasises one more interesting point in French song which, more than any other, determined the character of its music throughout the century—namely, the liquid quality of its verse. We may also mention among Saint-Saëns' songs the Barcarolle, the *Désir de l'Orient*, an effective

## SAINT-SAËNS AND MASSENET

concert piece, and *Au Cimetière*, which is one of the most popular.

Jules Massenet (1842-1912), tireless composer of operas, wrote many songs which stand fairly high among French lyrics of their class. They have a certain facility and geniality to commend them, and in particular a voluptuous sinuous contour. Massenet's use of the slow 12/8 or 9/8 tempo was one of his chief stocks-in-trade. But, except as pleasing and unpretentious parlor songs, we cannot regard them very seriously. Though his lifetime overlapped the 'new school' by more than two decades, he is distinctly of the old school. His harmony is quite old-fashioned and he shows but few traces of the French search for atmosphere. His one personal quality is an increased sensuousness of melody, achieved without special aid from the accompaniment. The best of his songs is among the earliest, the 'Elegy,' adapted from an orchestral intermezzo which formed part of the incidental music for *Les Erinnyes*. In *A Colombine* he has created a charming genre piece. In the *Nuit d'Espagne* a gentle and reserved song of exotic tendencies, in the *Chant Provençal* a typical 12/8 melody, luscious yet 'chaste,' over the barest of chord accompaniments. In the sprightly *Sérénade du passant* he is altogether delightful, especially in insinuating into the melody more meaning than meets the ear. On the other hand, he has written any number of sentimental songs which, like 'Open Thy Blue Eyes,' are rubbish.

In the same general school are a number of composers (some of them Massenet's pupils) who have written songs in quantity, some with occasionally charming results. One of the most fertile and popular was Benjamin Godard (1849-1895). His work was marred by the rapidity with which it was written, necessitating an uncritical attitude on the composer's part which is fatal to the general body of a man's work.



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Several felicitous examples of Godard's work, however, well deserve their popularity, especially the Berceuse from *Jocelyn*, the delicate 'Florian's Song,' and the spirited Barcarolle, *Embarquez-vous*. *L'Amour* may be taken as an example of the great majority of his songs—conventional but pleasing.

Of even greater popularity and possibly more originality is the work of Cécile Chaminade (born 1861), whose songs occasionally approach a high degree of artistic finish. In her genre songs Mme. Chaminade is especially felicitous. Several random examples are the *Chanson Slave* and the *Chanson Espagnole*, among the pseudo-national lyrics; the *Mandoline* and *Madrigal* and *Voisinage*, each in a special and easily appreciated style. In her dainty imitations of the antique the composer shows her French training and zest—notably in *Auprès de ma mie*, *Noël des oiseaux*, and *Ronde d'amour*. In her emotional songs, such as *Chanson triste* and *Amoroso*, she is less distinguished. And in the religious or grandiose songs, such as *Immortalité* and *l'Idéal*, she is pompous, noisy, and uninspired. Her creative impulse is not great. Her ideas are most charming when they are most modest. But when she is working with material that is to her taste she can manipulate it with a deftness that many a first-rate composer might be proud of.

A further group of French song writers may be mentioned because their work contains some elements of distinction. Gabriel Pierné (born 1863), a musician of fine endowments and a force in Parisian musical life, works with deftness and excellent taste, chiefly in the smaller forms and the more modest ideas. J. Guy Ropartz (born 1864), a pupil of César Franck, has kept himself clear of the modern radical tendencies in Paris and has continued to produce songs in the old manner, but considerably more vigorous and creative in content than was once the fashion. Xavier Léroux (born 1863),

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with at least one fine song, 'The Nile,' should be named, and also Augusta Mary Anne Holmès (1847-1903), an Irish woman who lived and worked in Paris and wrote songs of large and pretentious outline, best of which, perhaps, is 'An Irish Noël.' Reynaldo Hahn (born 1874), one of the weaker pupils of Massenet, followed his master's method to considerable popularity but to little artistic purpose. Other song-writers who may profitably be mentioned are Arthur Coquard (born 1846) and George Adolphe Huë (born 1851).

### V

The position of Edward MacDowell (1861-1911) as a lyricist is still disputed. Mr. Finck ranks him among the four greatest song-writers of the world. In point of sincerity and individuality he was surpassed by few of his contemporaries. From the beginning of his maturity on he wrote scarcely a note that did not bear his personal signature. In two or three of his songs he is certainly hobnobbing among the great. But, though nearly all his work is charmingly individual, one may doubt whether he has written a sufficient quantity of superior songs to entitle him to the rank to which Mr. Finck assigns him. But the songs are there, independently of what rank this or that writer chooses to give him. He is unsurpassed in giving his music certain special qualities or moods, distinct, yet not got by strained means—moods such as banter, sentimental tenderness, playfulness, and the like. The achieving of such results is one of the ultimate things in song writing, from the technical point of view, and many first rank composers have been unequal to it. To achieve it is a special mark of genius for the art-song. Again, we find that MacDowell's songs have a remarkable amount of distinction and individuality; though the personality of the composer is over all, each

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of the songs has its own personality, too. The range is considerable; from playfulness, through sensuous emotion, to deepest tragedy, and each type, at MacDowell's hands, is equally individual and almost equally successful. The MacDowell idiom, derived in part from Grieg, is used flexibly for many things and is usually a fine instrument of emotional expression. We should not, however, leave this listing of the qualities of MacDowell's songs without mentioning their frequent tendency to the banal, a tendency which is never marked or long sustained, but which appears in unexpected places to rob the songs of their final touch of aristocratic distinction.

The earliest of the MacDowell songs is a group of Scotch melodies, an endeavor to imitate the Scotch style, yet not so closely as to do away with individuality. 'Deserted,' to the old words 'Ye Banks and Braes of Bonny Doon,' \* is appealing and tragic, altogether a fine piece of work. But the Scotch songs of opus 34 are more beautiful and more personal. Both 'Menie' and 'My Jean' (words by Burns) deal in the Scotch cadences and phrases, but they might also stand as a study for the great songs of opus 47. The songs of opus 26, entitled 'From an Old Garden,' show MacDowell at his best in his lighter moods. 'The Blue Bell,' which maintains a mood half of banter and half of pathos, is admirable, and 'The Myrtle,' with its harmonic freedom yet cogent expression, is of decided technical interest. Leaving to the last the two greatest of MacDowell's song groups, let us make mention in passing of opus 56, two excellent songs, 'The Swan Bent Low to the Lily' and 'A Maid Sings High and a Maid Sings Low,' which are as personal as anything the composer has done; of opus 58 with the pleasing 'Merry Maids,' and of opus 60, with 'Tyrant Love,' another very personal song, and 'Fair Springtide,' original and invigorating.

\* See Musical Examples (Vol. XIII).

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The two great opus numbers referred to are 40 and 47. The 'Six Love Songs' of opus 40 include one which is perhaps the best known of all MacDowell's vocal work—"Thy Beaming Eyes." In this song we must admire the strenuousness of the hot emotion which the composer is able to conjure up, but we cannot help wishing that he had chosen a medium a little less vulgar. This song contains much of MacDowell's ability, but of MacDowell's artistic message it contains less than almost any other. The second song of the group, "Sweetheart, Tell Me," is delicate and perfect as a cut gem. But by all means MacDowell's greatest song-group is opus 47, 'Eight Songs.' The first of the group is the second of the composer's songs in popularity—"The Robin Sings in the Apple Tree." Nowhere has MacDowell been more felicitous in the delineation of mood in tiny details; the number of treasures in this short song is truly surprising. The 'Midsummer Lullaby' is a masterpiece. Again it is the accuracy of mood-painting that strikes us, this time the hot laziness of the full summer day. The third piece, the 'Folksong,' is in MacDowell's most vigorous and admirable style. 'The West Wind Croons in the Cedar Trees,' 'In the Woods,' and 'Through the Meadow' are nature songs of much distinction, showing grace, buoyancy, or sentiment, as the case may be. But the finest song of the group, and the finest of all MacDowell's songs, is 'The Sea,' to William Dean Howells's words. Here we have in full strength the mood of tragic grandeur which has been struck seldom in modern art-songs. This song, at least, has not a touch of banality, not a note of mannerism, not a phrase which is not at once great music and genuine poetry. Many of MacDowell's songs are perhaps too personal to be generally appreciated. Here is one song which is utterly the product of his individual genius, but at the same time a universal artwork.

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Beyond MacDowell it is not easy to name a single American song-writer who has any claim to a position among the song-writers of the world. A few, especially in very recent years, have shown a marked talent which may be expected to develop into something unusual. But, on the whole, the American song output, though enormous, has been consistently and painfully second-rate in character. This is not to belittle the excellent work which certain Americans have accomplished in this field; but their interest must necessarily be local. The American song-writers are treated in detail in another volume,\* so we need here only mention them and the occasional treasures hidden in a mass of work too facile and imitative. We should name, however, one of their number who, with rather limited talents, has nevertheless made a place for himself in the hearts of people in Europe as well as in this country. This is Ethelbert Nevin (1862-1901), chiefly known among pianists for his charming suites of short pieces. Nevin's reputation as a song-writer rests chiefly on one lyric, 'The Rosary,' which has had a remarkable vogue, well deserved. It is difficult to find any other of his songs which approaches this in emotional breadth. But out of his numerous list there are a few which are well worth knowing. 'Sleep, Little Tulip' is a bit of a lullaby with a charming swing and a delicate sentiment, given an additional interest by the lilt of the accompaniment, which is managed with much skill. 'A Song of Love' is above the average in musical vigor and 'Orsola's Song,' to the French words of Jean Richepin, imitates with success the Gallic method. *In der Nacht*, to German words, is unusual for breadth and genuineness. Nevin is too often a mere sentimentalist, too often imitative, too often dependent on mannerisms and formulas. Some of these mannerisms, however, are effective, especially that of writing a con-

\* Vol. IV, chapters XII-XIV.

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trapuntal melody in the accompaniments, as in the second half of 'The Rosary.' Though his invention was facile rather than profound, and his musicianship slight, we cannot deny him praise for a certain delicacy of touch, a certain artistic sense of fitness, which were too often lacking in his American contemporaries.

It may not be out of place here to mention two song writers of modern Italy who have shown individuality and attained wide popularity. Francesco Paolo Tosti (born 1846), one time teacher of singing to the court of England, has written a number of songs of varying quality. His 'Goodbye Forever' is none the worse for having been played on all the hurdy-gurdies of London for twenty years past. The piece is as moving as any folk-song and as delicate as a lyric by Jensen. In his later songs, of which we may mention the well known 'Serenade,' he shows more care than in the earlier ones and the result has been some exquisite works, combining Italian grace and Italian fervor in equal proportions. 'At Vespers,' *Amore*, and *Mattinata* are among his best. Luigi Denza (born 1846) has attracted a unique position for himself in that one of his lyrics, the famous 'Funicula,' has been circulated more widely than any other piece of music of which there is record, having reached a sale of some 500,000 copies. His songs, which are all simple and addressed to the common people, are very numerous and include not a few of great charm and artistic grace.

## VI

In a later chapter we shall briefly study the wonderful song literature which has been created by the Russian composers in the last half century. From this list, however, we shall exclude two Russians who were extremely productive song writers and are still the best known of their land. For Rubinstein and Tschaikow-



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sky, though they were born in Russia, were Germans in their musical education and would have little to do with the 'neo-Russian' group which created the national art-song. They frequently attempt Russian 'local color' or oriental exoticism, but in nearly every case their attempt is mannered and self-conscious. Both suffered from over-production. To be quite plain, they seem to lack artistic conscience. Rubinstein, in particular, wrote a great quantity of songs, chiefly to German and Russian texts, which no sincere artist should have dared to sign. They were addressed to the drawing rooms and the tinsel concert halls of the time. Perhaps they were actually the pot-boilers with which he sought to eke out his income. Most of them should be passed over in charitable silence. Tschaikowsky shows a somewhat higher level of artistic effort, but too often he writes much noise and little music. His most pretentious efforts are often built upon themes that would hardly fill a penny whistle. However, he errs not so much through the cheapness of his melodies, as does Rubinstein, as through lack of artistic taste and control.

Anton Rubinstein (1830-1894), a concert pianist second only to Liszt, perhaps suffered from being a public pet. Usually his songs are insufferably sentimental, with a banality in almost every line which counteracts the charm latent in the idea. His accompaniments are usually thin and conventional. His romanticism is of the rag and tatter type, which calls upon the stock modulations and phrases in a routine way. One feels that the composer never *saw into* his songs, that he wrote three-fourths of his notes with his eyes shut. However, he has done a few thoroughly fine songs. 'The Asra,' to Heine's words, is highly emotional and picturesque. Rubinstein's setting of *Du bist wie eine Blume*, with its delicate piano background, may perhaps be ranked second to Liszt's. There is a fine lux-

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uriance about the song 'Golden Rolls the Kura Beneath Me,' while *Es blinkt der Tau* and *Die Waldhexe* can command the respect of musicians. 'Not with Angels' is another song well worth knowing. Perhaps the lyrics which show Rubinstein the musician in the best light are the 'Persian Songs,' which combine exotic coloring and great expressive beauty. Here, probably, the list ends. The remainder of Rubinstein's large output suffers continually from thinness and banality. The 'Modern Greek Love Song' is a touching melody of the simplest type and manages to escape the commonplaceness which seems always about to engulf it. 'Be Not so Coy' is graceful and musicianly, and 'The Ravens' contains considerable vitality. But it would be useless to enlarge a list of songs, none of which can be praised without some reservation. Rubinstein is one of the composers whose reputation is fast on the wane. We can part with him with light hearts, for what has replaced him is hardly second to anything in all song literature.

Nor in Tschaikowsky's case need we name the long list of songs that are only somewhat good. He has a few that are thoroughly fine. The children's song entitled 'Legend' makes effective use of modal harmony and remains a most touching and impressive lyric. 'At the Ball' is a melody such as Tschaikowsky could create on occasion, utterly aristocratic and artistic. Over this, as over few of his others, the conventional has not cast its spell. 'The Canary' is an elaborate effort at oriental color and is completely successful, the piano part being especially fine. The piece is most effective in the concert hall. Perhaps the best known of the Tschaikowsky songs is the setting of Goethe's famous lyric, *Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt*. It may be taken as a type of Tschaikowsky's average. There is in it a certain intensity of feeling, but it is all strained, over orchestrated, as it were, and every now and then—





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banal. The long list of Tschaikowsky songs includes a number which attempt to be impressively dramatic. They usually make their effect at first hearing, but they fall to pieces beneath scrutiny. They suggest too much brass and percussion and too little—music.

Another Slav whose songs are mainly German is Moritz Moszkowski (born 1851). He wrote with less ambitious intent than Tschaikowsky and achieved some charming results, as in his well known 'Slumber Song.' But the conventional hangs over his work, and his is one of the reputations which is fast dying.

## VII

The England of the last half of the nineteenth century has left us little that we can treasure in song music. Easily the most popular composer of the time was Sir Arthur Sullivan (1842-1900), who wrote the music of the inimitable Gilbert and Sullivan operettas, which are quite as perfect in their way as Mozart's operas. If we were to include in this list the songs from these pieces we should have a song literature altogether remarkable and charming. But outside of his stage works Sullivan was surprisingly cheap in his vocal music. It is hard to explain the quantity of songs he put out which would hardly have been a credit to a low-class music hall. They are for the most part unbelievably sentimental and commonplace. A few of his less popular songs, however (for example, the 'Arabian Love Song' and 'O Fair Dove, O Fond Dove'), showed an effort at artistic creation, and among the popular ones we may find a handful, such as 'Sweet-hearts,' which are tolerable. But in this description we have omitted one song which is of quite a special calibre. This is the universally known 'Lost Chord.' Perhaps the piece is unduly sentimental; perhaps the religious sentiment of it is somewhat theatrical. But on

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the whole it is certainly a fine and noble inspiration. It is not a bit the worse for its huge popularity. The musical material is impressive in the extreme and the handling is admirable.

Frederick Cowen (born 1852) was a prolific composer of songs (his output numbers nearly 300) and, next to Sullivan, was the most popular song-writer of his time. His talent was limited, being wholly satisfactory only in work of a light and fanciful character. In this field he well deserves his reputation. But his sentimental songs are in the worst tradition of the time. His influence in this sort of music has been huge, and he may almost be called the father, for England and America, of the brood of sentimental pieces that pose as art-songs. He has been a potent factor in the debasing of the taste of concert audiences, and singers should know him chiefly as an admirable example of what to avoid. Why the songs of this class are bad might perhaps be told on paper. But a far better answer would be a comparison between them and a few first-rate songs, say by Franz or Brahms. A little familiarity with songs of the Cowen type will show how utterly they fail to ring true to healthy sentiment.

Another popular song writer of Sullivan's time was Stephen Adams (1844-1911), whose real name was Michael Maybrick. The great popularity of his songs of the sea, such as 'Nancy Lee' and 'The Midshipmite,' or of his romantic songs, such as 'In Days of Old,' is quite justified. They do not parade as art-songs (rather they might be justly called folk-songs), but in their vigor and straightforwardness they might serve as a model to many a precious song-writer with more sentimentality than talent. A more recent song from this composer, 'The Holy City,' combines to a remarkable degree the popular quality with real musicianship.

The most genuine song-writer of this period was Arthur Goring-Thomas (1851-1892), a man of delicate

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instincts and fine artistic sense whose work has never received the recognition it deserves. His field of expression was not wide, but within it he worked with a wealth of imagination and refined sense of fitness which England at the time could not match. He was the one true romanticist of his land. His product is perhaps a trifle morbid, but, such as it is, it is free from tricks and cheapness and is absolutely sincere. As a sentimentalist, pure and simple, he is among the best. He was, indeed, one of the few sentimentalists who could approach the tragic mood without losing in his music the ring of sincerity. And as an artist of the voice England for two centuries was not able to show his fellow. Some of his most perfect work as a lyricist is shown in his cantata, 'The Swan and the Skylark,' and in his operas. His solo songs and duets show the refinement and polish which is not that of formal learning, but represents the loving care of an intense artistic nature. Among the best may be mentioned 'Wind in the Trees,' 'Barbarine's Song,' 'One Morning, Oh, so Early,' and the 'Night Hymn at Sea.'

Before closing this chapter we should mention the romantic and colorful work of Liza Lehman (born 1862). Her song cycles, especially those from Omar Khayyám and Robert Louis Stevenson, are well known. The former, 'A Persian Garden,' offers points of remarkable interest to the musician. The music, which covers a considerable emotional range, is equally felicitous in a number of various moods. The exotic color of the cycle is managed with rare taste and effectiveness. The accompaniment is a model of richness and appropriateness. We can safely say that this writer is the only woman composer who has ever succeeded signally in the tragic mood. But her peculiar contribution (for it can almost be called a contribution) is the fine artistry with which she concentrates great emotional feeling into the briefest time. (It is interesting

## ENGLISH SONG IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

to note that she does it almost entirely by the use of the *da capo* or 'A-B-A' form.) In the variety of styles at her command and in the sureness of her artistic touch she is quite alone among woman composers of the present day.

## CHAPTER XIII

### HUGO WOLF AND AFTER

Wolf and the poets of his time; Hugo Wolf's songs; Gustav Mahler; Richard Strauss as song-writer; Max Reger's songs—Schönberg and the modern radicals.

#### I

GERMAN song since Schubert has known nothing like a fallow period. In no single decade has the song product been markedly inferior to any other. After Schubert and Schumann there came Liszt, Franz, and Brahms; and after Brahms there came Wolf, Strauss, and Reger. The Germany of these latter men was, of course, a very different Germany from that which preceded the Franco-Prussian War. It was a united Germany, an increasingly centralized Germany, a more prosperous Germany. In many ways it seems to be a more Philistine Germany. But, though the political and social conditions changed after 1870, this change was not expressed in the national literature for a number of years. And in the lyric poetry it was chiefly the poets of the old régime who held sway toward the end of the century. These poets had come in on the reaction that followed the failure of the liberal political movement of 1848. When men found their political strivings frustrated they once more turned their attention to their souls. Chief representative of 'art for art's sake' was Emmanuel Geibel (1815-1885), an extremely talented literary man who cultivated the pure

## WOLF AND THE POETS OF HIS TIME

lyric with great success. Geibel was not a man of great originality. He clung to the old poetic motives and to the old ideas concerning the relations of man. But his versification was very engaging, being gentler and smoother than is usual in German poetry, and his manipulation of ideas and images was extremely deft. Next to him in popular esteem was Eduard Möricke (1804-1875), a Swabian pastor who took to writing verse as an amusement. In addition to an insinuating use of image and word music he had that rare quality in a lyric poet—a sense of humor. His touches of fun are always wholesome and delightful. Paul Heyse (1830-1911) was best known as a novelist and short-story writer, but his lyric gift was marked and his translations from the Spanish and Italian attained great popularity. Detlev von Liliencron (1844-1909) was another of the foremost lyricists of the time. In a later generation Otto Julius Bierbaum (1865-1909) and Richard Dehmel (born 1863) were influential. They rank with Hugo von Hoffmannsthal (born 1874) as the foremost lyricists of present-day Germany. These men are not great. They by no means express Germany as Tennyson, for instance, expressed mid-Victorian England. But, taken together, they supply the growing demand for sensuous, subjective poetry and they execute their task with a fine command over the lyrical qualities of the German language.

We have not yet finished with the process of 'placing' Wolf (1860-1903) as a song writer, but there are competent critics who would rank him above Schubert (that is, as the greatest in musical history) and any number who would rank him just below. Certainly his work is free from any of the careless or conventional writing which disfigures so much of Schubert's work. The standard which Wolf set for himself in his song-writing is perhaps more exacting than that set by any other composer. His songs measure up to

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more separate tests than do those of any other one man. It is evident, then, that his musicianship must have been of the highest order. He had the benefit of the great generation of musicians who had followed Schubert and brought to maturity the work which he had only begun. Schubert was too often content with a type accompaniment, a conventional turn of phrase which only serves to fill up a measure and (what is worse) with an indifferent bit of music when something first-rate didn't enter his head. Moreover, his technique, from the point of view of accurate emotional expression, was necessarily limited, since his task was a comparatively new one. Wolf had this one immense external advantage—that he began his work after 'Tristan' had been written. He was able to write his songs with an accurate acquaintance with the most powerful emotional idiom the world has ever seen. Whether or not Wolf was the superior of Schubert in absolute genius is another matter. But undoubtedly, taken all in all, his songs must satisfy modern ears and modern demands better than those of Schubert.

When we mention Wolf's debt to Wagner, when we mention the Wagnerian influence in his songs, we do not mean that he has been an imitator. The principles which Wagner exemplified in the opera could have but a slight application to the art of song writing. Further, Wolf was far too individual to carry over Wagner's precise methods and mannerisms into his work. When we speak of the Wagnerian influence on Wolf we mean merely the influence which a supreme master in any art must exert on all who have studied his work. Wagner had opened the eyes of men to a musical world almost undreamed of before—a world of chromatic harmony and free modulation which had been no more than vaguely implied in the music preceding him. He had shown men, by one or two masterful examples, that the thing could be done; the others then set about

**Hugo Wolf**  
*After a photograph from life*



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## HUGO WOLF'S SONGS

to do it in their own ways. Among these others was Wolf, as a young man an adorer of Wagner and constant student of his scores, a finely balanced musical nature which could understand and synthesize the work of great men and recreate out of this understanding an art that was his own. Accordingly we find Wolf far more chromatic in his procedure than any song writer before him, far more concerned with his accompaniments, freer and more accurate in his treatment of the voice—yet not a whit less lyrical than any other song writer who had ever lived. Wolf's songs are not Wagnerian operas. His great emphasis upon the accompaniment as an instrument of expression is not an imitation of the Wagnerian orchestra with its function as 'soul of the drama.' His use of the germ-motive is not an imitation of the Wagnerian leit-motif, standing for a single character or idea. Wolf could not have *imitated Wagner* without making his songs operatic and unlyrical. What he did was to write songs absolutely in the fine old German song tradition after he had fertilized his mind and invention with an accurate knowledge of the works of the greatest modern German musician.

Wolf's two predominant technical qualities were truly in line with the development of German song, apart from any extraneous influence. These two influences were the significance given to the piano part and the closest accuracy in the treatment of the words. Wolf's procedure with the words—his rigid adherence to the 'one-syllable, one-note' principle, his insistence that the voice part should agree with the special accents of meaning as well as with the ordinary accents of prosody—this might have been merely a meticulous fad with another composer. But with Wolf it truly represented his attitude toward the art-song, an attitude strongly contrasted with, say, that of Brahms. He carried it out not as a rule to be observed (he occasionally

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broke it himself), but as an expression of his artistic feeling. His melody, of course, is somewhat free, but its musical integrity is never disfigured to meet the demands of the text. It is genuinely lyrical, but so managed as to give more regard to details than in most composers' songs. Wolf's piano parts are an unending delight to the musical student. They are more ambitious, more complex, more exuberant than those of Franz, but no less perfect from the point of view of workmanship. Unlike Franz, again, they are very highly colored and filled with details which interpret particular nuances in the text. Especially are they interesting for doing in an emotional and dramatic way what Franz so often did in an intellectual way—developing his piano part from a simple musical germ. Franz's accompaniments are charming in the highest degree, but rarely emotionally moving. Wolf's speak with an emotional voice not surpassed in any songs of the nineteenth century.

Ernest Newman points out as Wolf's highest glory the immense variety and distinctness of the characters he has interpreted in his songs. Heroes, lovers, fools, warriors, drunkards—these and a host of others he has put into his music with almost unvarying success. Newman compares him in this respect with Shakespeare. Certainly, many of the greatest masters have shown marked limitations in this respect. Wolf's interpretative ability seems almost unlimited. He felt his poems as few other composers have done. He worked much as Schubert worked—in a sort of trance, dreaming over his poems, living and sleeping with his characters, composing his music in a kind of hypnotic state and writing down his music with such inspired insight that the first draft was nearly always the last. As a result we feel that his interpretation is the ultimate and perfect interpretation. He seems to have had no technique, in the sense of a musical system which dic-

## HUGO WOLF'S SONGS

tates notes of itself. Wolf's notes were dictated by direct inspiration as with few other song-writers in musical history. The songs are as individual as the songs of Franz and far more dissimilar in the external plan and contour. There is such a thing as a Franz style. There is no such thing as a Wolf style; each song stands utterly by itself.

The numerous songs written by Wolf before 1888 are not to be counted in this general summary of his work. They are experimental and youthful, showing a progress toward the masterful maturity of his great period. But they comprise several which can rank with his best. Of these we may mention 'The Mouse Trap,' an exquisitely humorous thing, and 'To Rest,' which is very tender and moving. 'Biterolf,' composed in 1886, is a warrior's song, striking the great vein of heroism. The 'Serenade' of 1888 is one of the best known of the Wolf songs, a piece in which the piano and voice sing together as if they were parts of one complex instrument. The fifty-three Möricke songs of the year 1888 include such a number of masterpieces that it may well be called the most remarkable single group of songs ever written. The variety and perfection of these songs would lead one to believe that they were the selected work of many years of labor. We cannot sufficiently praise the variety of expression—the human types of *Das verlassene Mägdlein*, *Agnes*, *Der Jäger*, *Erstes Liebeslied*, and the *Lied eines Verliebten*; the religious emotion of *Auf ein altes Bild*, *Schlafendes Jesuskind*, *Zum neuen Jahr*, and the *Gebet*; the poetry and fantasy of the *Elfenlied*, *Um Mitternacht*, *Nixe Binsefuss*, and others; the deep and varied emotion of *Der Genesene* and *Die Hoffnung*, *Er ist's*, *Nimmersatte Liebe*, *An eine Aeolsharfe*, *Verborgeneheit*, *Lebewohl*, and the *Gesang weylas*, the lively humor of *Der Tambour*, *Auftrag*, and *Abschied*. Humor is also present in the group of thirteen Eichendorf songs, as in the delightful

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*Der Scholar*. The passionate note is finely struck in *Liebesglück* and *Seemann's Abschied*; and the *Nachtzauber* and 'Serenade' show a masterful power of poetic suggestion.

The Goethe songs are generally regarded as, on the whole, a retrogression after the magnificent Mörike group. They are slightly less spontaneous, somewhat too loaded down with detail. But nothing could be finer as an expression of passion than *Hochbeglückt in deiner Liebe* and *Komm Liebchen, komm*. In the grand manner are *Grenzen der Menschheit* and *Prometheus*, the latter one of the most magnificent songs ever written. A certain inimitable dithyrambic humor sings in the Drinking Songs—*So lang man nüchtern ist, Was in der Schencke waren heute, and Trunken müssen wir alle sein*. Far removed from the Teutonic nobleness of Goethe are the Spanish and Italian songs, to words by Geibel and Heyse. Their average is very high and it is almost at random that we select the following for mention: *Nun bin ich dein; Geh, geliebter; Ich führ über Meer; Komm, o Tod von Nacht umgeben, Tief im Herzen, In dem Schatten meiner Locken, Auf deinem grünen Balkon, Der Mond hat eine schwere Klag erhoben, Was für ein Lied, Und willst du deinen Liebsten sterben sehen, and Sterb' ich, so hüllt in Blumen meine Glieder*. Finally, we should mention the fine settings to three sonnets of Michael Angelo, the last things Wolf wrote before going to the madhouse, hopelessly insane. *Wohl denk' ich oft, Fühlt meine Seele, and Alles endet was entsteht* are deeply sincere expressions of the pessimism which comes at times over the greatest of souls.

## II

Gustav Mahler (1860-1910) has received little recognition as a song-writer outside of Germany. The great

## GUSTAV MAHLER

effort of his life was expended on his symphonies, which are planned on a scale larger than man had ever thought of before. In many ways Mahler was a very great master. As an artist he was unimpeachable. As a writer for the orchestra he was original and forceful. As a developer of the new radical technique he holds a high place in the history of German music. It may be doubted whether his musical ideas and his power of musical architecture were equal to the execution of his stupendous plans. But these faults, if they exist, do not enter greatly into his songs—at least into the most typical of them. For Mahler had one quality which always stood by him when others failed. This was his intimate feeling for the folk-song. A peasant by birth, he retained a certain simplicity of soul in his attitude toward music which seems contradicted by his great technical complexity. He can reproduce not only the simple form of the folk-song, but also its spirit, its naïve literal quality, which takes joy in what a sophisticated person would find common. This quality we find very frequently in his songs. The greatest of these is the group entitled *Kindertotenlieder*, which are loved in Germany (and especially in Vienna) almost beyond any other. These dirges for children have hardly any parallel in music. They combine an intense pathos with something of the naïve simplicity of the child. They are not mere dirges. They are dirges for those ‘the doubly dead in that they died so young.’ The congenital faults of Mahler are not to be found here. The songs are almost above criticism from the musical standpoint. But Mahler the peasant is to be seen especially in the songs from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, that wonderful collection of German folk-poetry which has been such a storehouse for the nation in the last century. While these have not the spiritual elevation or the consistently high musicianship of the *Kin-*



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*dertodtenlieder*, they preserve an unconventional freshness of spirit which is hardly less remarkable.

Richard Strauss is generally regarded as the great continuer of the German song tradition. That he is a true continuer is perfectly correct. Whether his music, absolutely considered, is as 'great' as people once thought is still undecided by the public. Some profess to discover liberal injections of the charlatan in Strauss's work. Whether he sometimes gets his effects by cheap means which the artist in him would despise is a question to be argued elsewhere. We must, however, grant him two great faculties—the faculty of beautiful melody and that of musical ability. In sheer beauty of theme (and this is especially true in some of his songs) he is worthy to be regarded as of the line of Schubert and Brahms. In musical learning there are probably not half a dozen men in the world to-day to equal him and there was a time, ten or more years ago, when he seemed to stand almost alone. While for some years past his symphonic poems and operas have overshadowed his smaller work, he has been known from the beginning as a brilliant writer of songs, and has not ceased to give some of his best energies to song composition. The result is a truly brilliant list of lyrics. We can no more deny the able musicianship of the later ones than we can deny the impressive beauty of the earlier. They are far from being repetitions of each other. This great variety, both in mood and in technical style, proves what a rich fund of ideas and artistic power the composer had to draw from. The technique of the later ones is about that familiar to us in the Strauss operas, a brilliant use of dissonance and rapid modulation combined with an extremely bold polyphony. At the basis of this style is always a theme or a group of themes as simple, as conventional in conception as anything in Schubert. It is as though Strauss were afraid of losing utterly the interest

## RICHARD STRAUSS AS SONG-WRITER

of the average man and gave him every now and then a simple tune that he would be sure to enjoy. But it is more than this. For Strauss is a German of the Germans. His whole musical culture is truly built on the great German tradition of Bach-Beethoven-Brahms. His complexity is only a development of the noble simplicity of all fine German music. It is right and proper that his themes should be simple and understandable. But it is possible, and probably perfectly just, to argue that he has failed to make the one part of his music seem a development of the other. We feel here that the new style and the old are both present, that they are juxtaposed, that they have not been fused or synthesized. And this duality, which we feel in some of the operas and in the later orchestral works, also appears in his songs. It makes these later songs less admirable, from the technical standpoint, than those of Ravel, who has organized his materials into an almost homogeneous technique.

However the case may stand in this matter Strauss's early songs will remain as worthy of a place in the great German hierarchy. Opus 10 contains a number of masterpieces. *Zueignung* is, in sheer beauty, almost equal to Schumann at his best. 'The Night' is a simple song of great loveliness and 'Patience' is a superbly eloquent piece of emotional writing based on an accompaniment of simple repeated chords. It is in work like this that a great composer tests himself out. This power to achieve great beauty within narrow limitations is, as we have so often pointed out in the course of this book, the proof that genuine creative power is there. These songs which we have just mentioned are among the very best in the Strauss list. Others of the first rank are: 'I Love Thee,' opus 37, a powerful example of emotional lyricism; *Ich trage meine Minne*, opus 32, a simple piece of marvellous beauty and grace; and 'With Thy Blue Eyes,' opus 56, a song of

## THE VOICE AND VOCAL MUSIC

unusually tender and appealing quality. Among the earlier songs we should mention the charming *Morgen; Wozu, Mädchen, soll es frommen*, opus 19; *Nachtgang*, opus 29; and *Traum durch die Dämmerung*, the last one of the most admired. 'Rest My Soul' and the 'Nuptial Song'—the former very simple and the latter highly organized—are stimulating examples of Strauss's art. Of the later songs (which seem to show a falling off in artistic sincerity) we may mention 'The Three Holy Kings,' opus 56, which is a sort of miniature opera, with an abundance of incidental music in the form of a stately march. 'The Lonely One' of opus 51 contains a bass part very effectively used and 'The Valley' is musical description of a high order.

Max Reger (born 1873) is a sharp contrast to Strauss. People have seen fit to describe him as a schoolmaster. This is justified in that Reger is one of the most eminent technical musicians in Germany and a master of strict fugue and counterpoint in the modern idiom equalled by no one else in the world. His cast of mind seems to be all with the classics, though he is radical enough in his musical style when he chooses to be. He writes largely in the 'absolute' forms and seeks none of the means for effect that are so generally cultivated nowadays. In these respects he may be a 'schoolmaster.' But beneath the austerity of his style there is a wonderful fund of ideas and along with it a deftness in using them that makes his technique available for many very different sorts of music. In his songs Reger shows a wide variety. The fact which proves that he is musician and not schoolmaster is that the songs requiring fancy, deftness, sense of style are quite as fine as the others. He always considers well what he writes. By some his songs may not be considered lyrical as Schubert's are, but his vocal music is truly music that can be sung and its effectiveness on the platform is likely to outstrip expectations. The songs have

## MAX REGER'S SONGS

much beauty of melody, much suavity and charm, and especially a nice adaptation to the spirit of the text. They contain in rich quantity the gift of humor. In downright lively fun Reger reminds one of Chabrier. The songs are all very human. The first feeling one has in studying them is respect for the man's musicianship. But his technical learning is so unfailing that this quality becomes a bore and one becomes conscious of the genuineness of the feeling and the accuracy of expression. Reger's superb technique has not used him; he has used it. We may consider it likely that Reger's reputation will grow considerably in years to come. The songs in particular should be more widely known and loved. They will not tickle lazy ears, but they will give a rare delight to discriminating ones. Certainly there are few men working now who are on the whole more admirable in their songs than Reger.

Reger's technical style marks most of his songs. But underneath they have a distinct individuality. The Folk-Song in opus 37 is managed with great simplicity and taste. 'The Dying Child,' from opus 23, exemplifies Reger's free but well considered harmonic method. 'Of Kissing,' from the same group, shows us another Reger, as dainty and popular as Brahms in lighter mood. *Traum durch die Dämmerung*, from opus 35, has a wonderful accompaniment of half-suggested interweaving voices and is considered superior to Strauss's setting of the same poem. The long-drawn melodies (in both the piano and the voice part) of 'Love-Longings' show us still another Reger, a master of restrained sensuous effect. The Lullaby of opus 43 is fitted out with a very complex accompaniment, but retains a luscious and quiet effect from sheer power of musicianship. Two of Reger's best songs are 'I Believe, Dear Love' and the 'Prayer,' from opus 62. The former is a charming scherzo movement and the latter illustrates

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the tendency, increasing in song accompaniments for half a century, to spread the piano part over an extremely wide range of notes. 'The Willow Tree' of opus 48 is a study in a style common to the French song writers, that of gaining emotional effect from the mere juxtaposition of chords.

The *Schlichte Weisen* of opus 76 are perhaps Reger's most typical and most highly developed product in this field. These 'simple tunes' are not at all simple in point of technique, making use of all the virtuosity and finesse of his wonderful musical equipment. The songs are nearly all in lighter vein and most of them are brightened with a delicious humor. They alone would place Reger among the most notable of musical humorists. None but the trained musician can appreciate all the technical genius that went into the writing of these songs. But any music-lover, any concert audience, in fact, can appreciate their beauty and sprightly charm. The thirty-six songs maintain a remarkably high level of creative musicianship, and in point of variety and taste they are almost unsurpassed. Nearly all of them are worth knowing, but we may mention a few among the best. 'In a Little Rose Garden' is written in imitation of the old German *Lied*. 'The Child's Prayer' is utterly delightful in its simplicity. The 'Dialogue' is inimitable in humorous description. In 'The Oath' and 'Concerning Love' the humor is irresistible, and in 'God's Blessing' musical learning has been put to the service of delicate delineation of mood.

### III

Arnold Schönberg (born 1874) has gained a place for himself in Vienna as the foremost spokesman of the ultra-radical school of German music. At the present time he is gradually coming to similar recognition in other countries. His musical manner is so utterly for-

## SCHÖNBERG AND THE MODERN RADICALS

eign to anything else we are familiar with that men believed for a long time (and quite excusably) that he was a mere charlatan, one who, failing to gain recognition by legitimate means, had resorted to the methods of the sideshow. That such a view is not tenable is shown by the recent course of events. In his earlier music he showed a fairly conservative style, based chiefly on Strauss, and used in a manner nothing short of masterful. Much of this early music has not been heard until recently, because of its astounding proportions. But it was ambition and not incompetence that kept Schönberg from prompt recognition. His development into the new style was steady. It could not possibly have been achieved without a very large fund of musical learning. The later scores show a contrapuntal ability which is astounding. The style, in the later works, is quite without parallel. Harmony is dropped altogether. Next to nothing remains of the system of Bach and Beethoven. On the other hand, the complexity of the contrapuntal web surpasses anything we have ever seen. The man's whole effort seems to be toward exuberant, overpowering counterpoint, a mass of separate voices mingled in delirious profusion, with inversions and augmentations and diminutions that make the brain dizzy. Judged by ears that have anything of the old-fashioned left in them this music cannot be beautiful. But Schönberg's appeal is to a different faculty, and only time can determine whether the appeal is justified. Schönberg explains that he is not trying to write emotional music, or descriptive music, or music with any sort of a meaning—but just pure music. If this be music, there are some definitions yet to be altered.

His songs, however, so far as they are yet catalogued, do not belong to this last period. The numerous songs of opera 1, 2, and 3 are of the first period, in which the style of Strauss was pretty closely adhered to. The

## THE VOICE AND VOCAL MUSIC

'Eight Songs' of opus 6 and the 'Six Orchestral Songs' of opus 8 are the product of the second period, the transition time in which the new Schönberg style was fairly well developed, but was used with frequent admixtures of the old. In the work of this period the hearer has a breathing space and can feel at first hearing that the music has *something* in it after all. However, second period or not, the two groups of songs we have mentioned will be quite mystifying to the average student. They are all very long and extremely difficult to sing. For that reason they are by no means available for ordinary concert use. They can be sung only by the highly capable singer and listened to only by an audience with highly trained ears. Perhaps, even under these conditions the listener will conclude they are not worth the trouble. But the one virtue which we can predicate of Schönberg without fear of contradiction is ability, and this virtue stands out strongly in the songs. We may mention from opus 6 the 'Maiden's Songs,' which attains a sense of immense physical violence. 'Forsaken' maintains its mood by a remarkably powerful use of a constantly repeated chromatic figure in the bass. But the best of these songs, and probably the greatest Schönberg has written, is 'The Wanderer,' words by Nietzsche. The other songs may be chaotic, but this has a cogent form. Moreover, it has definite melody and an accompaniment manipulated with a strong sense of design. The song as a whole is eloquent and impressive.

The six Orchestral Songs are also arranged for piano accompaniment and may be sung in concert. They are rather scenes than songs, being very long and composite and generally descriptive or dramatic, rather than lyrical. In them the technical element is all powerful. *Voll jener Süsse*, words from Petrarch, is a masterful study in the free movement of contrapuntal voices treated as in close harmony. *Das Wappenschild* is a

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magnificent song of action. The basic theme is stirring, the melody is marked and impressive, and the general structure is clear and cogent. The song exemplifies Schönberg's genius for making his counterpoint seem to express tremendous power of will. *Sehnsucht* is a comparatively simple song, the best of the six for the student to begin on. *Nie ward ich, Herrin, müd* is a magnificent study in powerful counterpoint. The tempo is slow, the themes are drawn out and sustained as though played slowly by a 'cello. The piece is extremely difficult to sustain at this slow tempo and is a tax on the listener's attention beyond anything of the sort that can be called to mind, but if one can feel its beauty at all one must be impressed by the majesty of the thing.

Another modern song writer whose work centres chiefly in Vienna is Joseph Marx, who has been prolific and successful. His style has many elements of the modern, but on the whole it is clear and intelligible and does not require a new set of ears for its appreciation. Marx's songs are often fresh and spontaneous and his sense of proportion is keen. Another of Schönberg's contemporaries is Franz Schrecker, whose work is likewise representative of the most advanced tendencies of the new Viennese school. This school is rather left behind by one of Schönberg's pupils, Anton von Webern, whose strange song, 'Over the Borders of the All,' is incapable of description in any terms hitherto used in connection with music. Which men of such a group will prove valuable to posterity is not to be decided at first investigation. But it will be well worth anyone's while to maintain an open mind and regard an innovator as innocent until he has proved himself guilty.



## CHAPTER XIV

### MODERN FRENCH LYRICISM

Fauré and the beginning of the new—Chabrier, César Franck, and others—Bruneau, Vidal, and Charpentier—Debussy and Ravel.

#### I

In a previous chapter we have mentioned the work of a generation of French song writers who represent the old and conservative school. In the present chapter we are concerned solely with the new and much more admirable French school of lyricism. But the distinction between the 'old' and the 'new' generations is not, of course, a distinction of time. Some of the old generation are now living and writing in the second decade of the twentieth century, while some of the originators of the new had begun their innovations as far back as the late seventies. This overlapping of individuals is inevitable where one school supplants another. For that reason we are here dealing with composers who, judged solely by dates, should have been treated as belonging to the last third of the nineteenth century.

It is well to keep in mind this overlapping. It will help us to see how fashions change in the world of art. The whole story of the transition from the old to the new in French music is of extraordinary interest. The change seemed to come at a bound, with Debussy's first tone poems and piano pieces. But as a matter of fact no great change comes about in this way. It germinates and nourishes itself for a long time unseen before it is ready to strike out as an independent force.

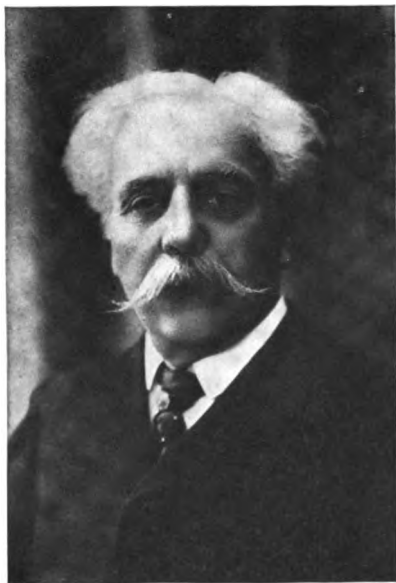
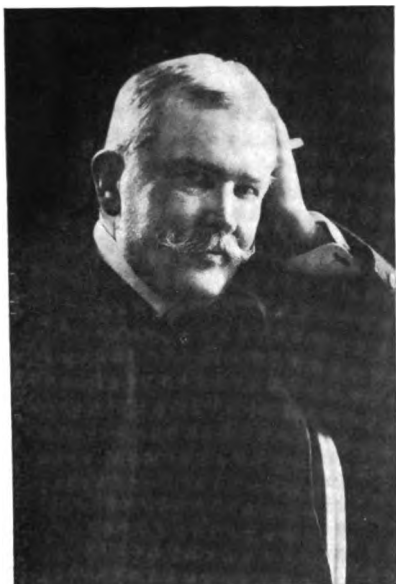


**Scandinavian and French Song-Writers**

**Emil Sjögren**  
**Gabriel Pierné**

**Christian Sinding**  
**Gabriel Fauré**







## FAURÉ AND THE BEGINNING OF THE NEW

The change is gradual, usually not more than half conscious. It would hardly be wrong to say that the whole change, up to a certain point, is accidental. But it is often difficult to study such a transition in its early stages. And the peculiar interest of Fauré's songs consists in the fact that they enable us to study the whole preliminary transition from the old to the new in French music, in simple terms and in steady development. Fauré was in a sense the laboratory for the new French impressionistic school. His experiments suggested dimly what could be done. His groping achievements showed how one might set about to do it. In his songs, from the earliest to the latest, we see in successive stages of development the harmonic procedure of the new school.

What was this change? What distinguished the old school from the new? It is worth while to answer this question briefly before touching Fauré's work in order to have some touchstone to hold up to the songs when we come to look at them. In general terms the change from the old to the new in French music was a change from the conscious, the deliberate, the intelligent to the subconscious, the subjective, the sensuous. The older composers sought always to appeal in some degree to the hearer's judgment, to please his sense of design, to speak with chastened clearness. We have often, in the course of this book, had occasion to mention the coldness and conventionality of the French music of the nineteenth century. Now the newer composers reacted against all this and set out to change it. In place of judgment they would have feeling; in place of the brain they would have the nerves. What matter about the sense of design if the *effect* was beautiful? What matter whether or not you adjudge it to be good, so long as you feel it to be good? In the new French music the intelligence can usually go to sleep. Intelligence is in the music (or rather it was in the making

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of the music) but it keeps out of sight. All the hearer needs is to surrender himself to the sensations. He needs delicate ears and responsive nerves. If he has these he will get poetry and pictures out of the music in plenty. In other words, it is our old conflict between knowledge and experience, between judging and feeling, between the brain and the senses.

Considered concretely, the change from the old to the new was a change which broke down completely all the old rules of musical harmony. The old harmony is represented at its purest in the chorales of Johann Sebastian Bach. It was a system of harmony based on pure (triad) chords, with dissonances properly prepared and resolved. In the old harmony each chord was like a chiselled block of stone, sharply differentiated from every other; the stones must fit well together, but they must always be distinct. The new system of harmony was founded upon the dissonance used for the sake of its effect on the ear. Queer mixtures of dissonance were used freely to produce an unusual impression on the ear, an impression which soon took on the name 'color.' Chords were now merged and confused, instead of being kept distinct. Tonalities and musical 'keys' were now becoming meaningless in a system whose notes rarely agreed with any tonality. The whole effect was that of being in a world of pure sensation, a world that seemed to be without reason and was therefore the better adapted to being *felt*. Along with the tendency toward vagueness in harmony came a tendency toward vagueness in melody. Various notes of the ordinary major scale would be altered at the whim of the composer and the surprises resulting were a fruitful source of sensuous effects. This freedom in the use of scales tended toward the now famous 'whole-toned' scale—a thing popularly supposed to have been invented by Wagner, but used, in reality, in the early days of Wagner by the Russian

## FAURÉ'S SONGS

Dargomijsky. The whole-toned scale makes every interval a whole step, thus robbing the scale of all internal variety and of any tonic or central 'pivotal' point. This would seem to rob the scale of its possibilities for color. But, curiously enough, it actually increased them. For as long as the scale is strange, our ears will inevitably compare it with the scale with which we are familiar. The result is a constant succession of surprises to our ears and senses—in short, an increase in the sensuous element. The newer school also uses the chromatic element to a great extent. In this it was only continuing the work of Wagner in his 'Tristan.' But there was this difference: that, whereas in Wagner's procedure the chromatic element was chiefly in the movement of the individual voices, the chords being constituted much as before, in the new French school both the voice leading and the chord building make free use of the semitone. To sum up, the new tendency is characterized concretely by vagueness of chord and of scale (with a continual tendency toward the whole-toned scale); by a free use of unprepared dissonance chosen chiefly for its sensuous effect; and by its constant effort to rid itself of the domination of a set key.

Gabriel Fauré (born 1845) started exactly on a par with the other French song writers of the seventies. His melody was tenuous and colorless; his harmony was thin and regular. Very gradually and very steadily he developed his colorful and unconventional harmony and a type of melody which, without being declamatory, was irregular and intimately fused with the accompaniment. Besides this cautious radical development, Fauré had a fairly generous fund of musical ideas and a sense of form and design superior to that of most of his contemporaries. It is doubtful if any one of his songs could be called first-class in absolute musical value. But his general standard was unusually



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high and steady. In nearly every case his songs are finished works of art. His faculty of self-criticism was keen and his attitude toward his art sincere. Though never a man of power, he possessed a lively intelligence which served to make him one of the most important figures in the French musical transition. He was not a pioneer in the more strenuous sense of the word. But he was truly a forerunner.

His earliest songs show little that is distinctive beyond a sensitive feeling for design and proportion. The best of them are 'May,' 'In the Ruins of an Abbey,' and 'Alone.' In the 'Tuscan Serenade' we catch perhaps the first definite note of a change. It is a very slight indication, but it is truly a foreshadowing of the development which was destined to be shown in his songs and in all modern French music. The indication we are referring to is in the following phrase:

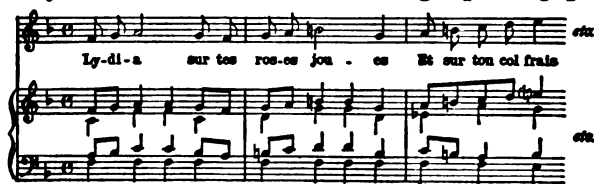


The unconventional note is the G flat. A composer of the previous musical generation would certainly have written G natural. The reason is that a long succession of whole steps is contrary to the spirit of the diatonic scale, upon which the classical musical system is based. The diatonic scale contains two half steps within the octave, thus giving to the succession of notes variety and to the scale itself individuality. The four notes which Fauré here uses are the only four adjacent notes in the scale which do not contain a half step. Even such a sequence without a half step was too long to suit the older composers. This sequence was to them the awkward place in the scale. It was within the letter of the scale but contrary to its spirit. So the older composer would have changed the G flat to G natural and would have felt a distinct gain in grace and fluency. Perhaps Fauré used the G flat only because it was different. He may have started his experiments purely in

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a search for variety. But he soon saw its possibilities. For this increased use of whole tones develops logically into the whole-toned scale (without any semi-tones and hence without any existence as a tonality). And this whole-toned scale is one of the chief features of the modern French music. But in addition to its melodic significance this bit of unconventionality on Fauré's part had deep harmonic significance. For if the identity of the diatonic scale is destroyed the whole system of classical harmony falls down. Without a definite scale you have no tonic for your harmony to centre around. And your harmonic scheme loses all its value as a system and reduces to a use of chords for themselves (that is, their sensuous value) or for their relation one with another. When you have done this your whole musical basis has changed and a new musical world has come into being.

This first timid attempt on Fauré's part was rapidly followed by other experiments, still cautious but logical and continuous in their direction. In the song entitled 'Lydia' we have the following opening phrase:



Here the tonality is disturbed not only in the melody but in the harmony also. Without preparation or warning Fauré disregards the half-step (B flat) which would have kept his music true to the diatonic, plunges apparently into a new key. But the change is not truly a modulation; the new key is really not a key. For the persistence of the F in the bass is a foreign element and shows that Fauré was not aiming at modulation at all. What he was aiming at was color. It is significant that the 'color' accompanies the words *roses joues*. This

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gentle dislocation of our conventional harmonic sounds like a blush translated into tones. Fauré had discovered modern 'atmosphere.'

From now on Fauré's experiments in this sort of thing become more frequent and more radical. In 'The Absent One' he uses ordinary suspensions for their atmospheric effect. Other songs of the same period—among which 'Silvie,' 'After a Dream,' 'Barcarolle,' and 'Over There' are the best—show traces of the development. 'Nell,' in opus 18, shows an increasingly delicate feeling for the inner voices in the accompaniment; the broken chords that support this melody are not a mere harmonic support but a delicate weaving of suggested voices. 'The Traveller' shows increased power and vigor. The 'Lullaby,' in opus 23 (one of his best songs), shows an attempt to get color by means of regular suspensions and dissonances, secondary seventh chords, and the like, all permitted in the old system but employed here with a special emphasis which is unescapable. 'The Secret,' in the same group, shows a similar attempt. The *Chanson d'amour* in opus 27 should be mentioned in passing.

In opus 39 we find the beautiful song, 'The Roses of Ispahan.' Here Fauré uses exactly the same harmonic device that we have pointed out in 'Lydia,' but this time with more confidence:



The awkwardness and uncertainty in the former passage is not to be found here. Fauré has discovered his medium. Henceforth he will use it with increasing boldness and success.

The 'Nocturne' of opus 43 and *Les présents* of opus

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46 show still more freedom in the use of constantly changing tonality. 'Tears' in opus 51 uses the chromatic shift of key almost continuously. But the trick has ceased to be a technical experiment. It has become a means of artistic expression. For this song, along with 'In the Cemetery,' shows tragic energy and a moving personal appeal which, as we have seen, had been all but absent from French song for half a century. *Mandoline* and *En Sourdine* in opus 58 are songs of consummate artistry and 'The Prison' of opus 74 reaches a very high emotional standard. The later songs show Fauré using generously the technical freedom which he so laboriously attained. But the songs are now less interesting. They are too likely to be abstruse without being inspired. Technically they are of extreme interest, but they suggest that Fauré had been left behind by the modern musical movement and was rather breathlessly trying to catch up.

Though Fauré's songs do not speak with the authority of genius they are extraordinarily fine in their deftness of handling, in their delicacy, in their unfailing sense of artistic fitness. Fauré, among the first of his generation, treated the accompaniment with respect. His piano parts are filled with interesting voices and gently stimulating movement. Each song has its individuality and style. The melody is sometimes truly eloquent, but too often partakes of the colorless nature of contemporary music. In the later songs the voice part is apt to be without much charm or even existence of its own, being only accommodated to the accompaniment. On the whole, though the absolute value of his songs would not justify the relative space we have here devoted to them, they reveal a sensitive and thorough craftsmanship which French music had too long been without.

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### II

Emmanuel Chabrier (1841-1894) was, with Fauré, one of the great forerunners of the modern French tendency. His service was chiefly performed in the field of orchestral coloring, but his songs show the influences of the new technique and are of much value in themselves. Chabrier was a more vital man than Fauré. His abundant animal spirits can be felt in all his music. His musical ideas were not always of much value, but the creative energy of the man is felt always. He was a great practical joker and has written some of the most delightful humorous songs we have. Three of his animal songs in particular are worth study. 'The Grasshoppers' makes continual use of the interval of the diminished second, lightly played in arpeggio chords on the piano, to suggest the chirping and rattling which we hear on a summer night. The melody, too, is extremely graceful. 'The Pigs' Pastoral' suggests the animals' grunts and offers even more dignified points of technical interest. The 'Villanelle of the Little Ducks' is a masterpiece. The charming words by Rosemonde Gérard (later the wife of the poet Ros-tand) are caught with absolute fidelity by the composer. The dignity, the absolute soldier-like seriousness of the little birds is inimitably suggested and the clear and richly varied accompaniment shows a musicianship of a high order. The simple 'Romance of the Star' reveals the genuine lyric ability of the composer and his colorful romanticism is shown in the 'Song for Jeanne' and 'The Happy Island.' Chabrier's songs show admirable energy and resourcefulness. As a practical joker the man can hardly be surpassed.

Among the pioneers of modern French music César Franck (1823-1890) holds the highest place of all. His profound musicianship, his openmindedness, his strain of religious mysticism in the service of his high

## CÉSAR FRANCK AND OTHERS

personal integrity, produced results than which French music can show nothing more admirable. A large number of the most eminent modern French composers were his pupils and their daring (though various) individualities show that his teaching was really a stimulation and nourishment of artistic power, not an imparting of rules. His songs (at least the later ones, which are all that interest us here) are few, but among them are several which are artistically flawless. The melody of 'The Marriage of the Roses' \* has a grace and a cogency which utterly charm the hearer. 'The Bells of Evening' and 'The Procession' have become classics in modern song literature. Technically these songs are not radical. But they make effective use of the new harmonic method, in Franck's own peculiar and convincing manner.

Four of Franck's pupils have done fine service in the cause of modern French song. Guillaume Lekeu (1870-1894) was an extremely talented man who would certainly have been one of the greatest of French composers had he lived to artistic maturity. His fine song, 'On a Tomb,' proves his creative power and his technical control. Henri Duparc (born 1848) was by birth one of the older generation and his use of the modern harmonies is conservative. Of his numerous songs some are marked by much grace and sensuous beauty, notably 'Invitation to the Journey,' the *Chanson triste*, and 'Ecstasy,' the last one of the finest songs of the period. Ernest Chausson (1855-1894) showed remarkable talents—energy, individuality, command over romantic expression. In his incomplete career he produced many songs, some of rare charm. But most important of the Franck pupils is Vincent d'Indy, probably the most vigorous creative power in modern French music. In him the intellectual quality dominates all the others. To many his music quite lacks

\* See Musical Examples (Vol. XIII).

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charm. The gentler qualities are absent. There is no obvious appeal to the senses. But his music is extremely stimulating to the musician and if well presented can plead for itself to the general public. His songs are few, but are evidently worked out with great care. Best known is the 'Sea Song,' which has a large rhythmic sweep admirably suggesting the swell of the ocean. His arrangements entitled *Chansons Populaires du Vivarais*, though applied to the simplest of musical materials, reveal his intellectual quality of musicianship. A list of his other songs (nearly complete) includes: 'Thecla's Complaint,' 'Madrigal,' *L'Amour de la crane*, 'The First Tooth,' 'Mirage,' and 'The Eyes of the Beloved One.' All these songs are fine and musicianly. But their appeal is limited, for many will find them lacking charm and sensuous beauty.

### III

At the present time it is difficult to regard Alfred Bruneau (born 1857) as a pioneer. His style is extremely thin and his melody seems at first glance to be cut from the same piece as Massenet's. But it is as an innovator that Bruneau is chiefly valued in France. In the early nineties, when Debussy was still an unknown experimenter (a 'crazy man,' like all radical innovators in their early years), he was thrilling Paris with his strange, new expressive harmonies, accurately delineating moods and suggesting colors. His operas, to librettos or adaptations from Zola, were a new thing in France. He experimented largely with unconventional harmonies and phrases for the voice which fell into no known category. Paris was at first puzzled, but quickly caught the idea. This was because, while Bruneau's music was truly an innovation and absolutely in line with the work of the new French school, it was

## BRUNEAU AND VIDAL

based on an idiom that France knew well and was managed so cautiously that the novelties were clear to the audience without being painful. By this time Bruneau seems little more than a composer of a past generation. Yet we must give him full credit for courage, for artistic feeling, and for considerable musical creativeness. His songs are not many. The *Lieds de France* (words by Catulle Mendès) are simple lyrics somewhat in the older traditional style of French songs, executed with a wealth of the most delicate suggestion of color. 'The Gay Vagabond' is in Bruneau's most typical style—a clear-cut and flowing melody over the simplest of chords, with the unusual features so discreetly written that at first hearing they hardly seem to be there at all.

Paul Vidal (born 1863) is only by courtesy included in the present chapter. He has escaped the curse of the old French school but his talent lies not at all in the field of innovation. He is a born lyricist, spontaneous, fresh, graceful. He is master of more than one style, as his settings of Shakespeare's lyrics prove. The 'Winter Song,' from 'Love's Labor Lost,' preserves a certain archaic flavor that is charming. The *Psaume nuptial* is grandiose but not pompous, an invigorating piece of honest music. In the children's song, 'The Play Leader,' Vidal attempts the descriptive, with a liberal use of dissonance and modern harmony, but it is evident that he has no natural turn toward the new style. Yet the song is dainty and picturesque. The *Ariette* 'Were I a Sunbeam' and the 'Address to the Well Beloved,' as well as a more recent song, 'Loving,' are well worth knowing for their simple musicianly beauty, and *Madame la fée* is a model of delicate lyricism. In his more ambitious mood Vidal is represented by 'Thine Eyes.' But he is a composer to whom we turn not for stimulation in technical matters, but for simple beauty. His songs are in that class which can



## THE VOICE AND VOCAL MUSIC

hardly enter into a history at all, but are delightful byways to turn to for mere pleasure.

Gustave Charpentier (born 1860), composer of the world-famous opera 'Louise,' has written a handful of songs, some of superior quality. The *Chansons à danser* are written in imitation of the old French dances, the spirit and the form being caught with keen insight. The best of the group is the 'Sarabande.' In the *Fleurs du mal* he is working in more familiar vein—that spirit of intense and somewhat chaotic emotionalism that distinguishes his operas. When we list the fifteen *Poèmes chantés* we have named all his songs. Charpentier's style is modern and genuinely French, but it is sharply distinguished from that of Debussy and Ravel. It is a development of that of Massenet (whose pupil Charpentier was), but it is developed an immense distance beyond 'Thaïs.' It contains more of the flesh (and more of the open air) than Debussy ever shows. 'Atmosphere' for its own sake enters into his work not at all. Everything is expressive and nearly everything expressive of human emotions. The musical style is admirably adapted to the purpose, choosing from the modern French technique just those elements which it can use. It makes constant use of detached or irregular phrases of melody and these it interweaves in great abundance into the harmonic texture. Charpentier strikes an admirable middle path in modern French music, being neither too intellectual, like d'Indy, nor too technical, like Ravel.

### IV

Concerning Claude Debussy (born 1862) the world is not yet decided. At one time he seemed the supreme innovator and the master tone-poet of modern times. Nothing so utterly new had ever come to people's ears

## CLAUDE DEBUSSY

since 'Tristan,' or probably since the later symphonies of Beethoven. He was for a number of years the chief spokesman for the ultra-modern to the whole world. For fully ten years he worked away, striving for the vision he had before him, until recognition finally came. From this very fact we may assume that he is an entirely sincere artist and not a charlatan as he was once considered. And, because he could work so consistently in his own style, he seemed to the world supremely creative. Possibly sober opinion has modified somewhat the opinion of ten years ago, when *Pelléas et Mélisande* was a startling novelty. The technical power with which he presented an absolutely new case remains as admirable as ever. But opinion of the absolute musical value of his work is somewhat diminishing, now that we are accustomed to the idiom. In plain words, it is beginning to be understood that Debussy repeats himself more than do most great composers, certainly more than a composer of the first rank would do. Moreover, his music does not hold a place in people's hearts. It is truly expressive of delicate moods (moods in which the nerves and senses are chiefly involved); but it does not express the things that are nearest to human beings. At bottom, the variety possible to Debussy's style is slight. He has painted many pictures, bearing many different titles, but all are mere rearrangements of the same figures and setting.

We find, to a greater extent than with most composers, that his whole art is fairly represented in his songs. They are numerous. And they are of a very high order of musicianship. It is evident Debussy put the best he had into these songs. They are luxuriant with the finest inventions of his remarkable technique. Not one is carelessly executed. Not one but is in some degree truly creative. Whether simple or abstruse, they make no concessions to popular effect. Some are valuable chiefly in their parts; as a whole they are not

## THE VOICE AND VOCAL MUSIC

firmly bound. But others are admirable in design and proportion. In most of them the accompaniment is so luxuriant that set form goes by the board; the song consists of its various parts. But in the accumulation of these various sensuous effects we get a new kind of unity. It is the unity of the impressionist painters—a synthesis performed in the observer or listener instead of being performed in the work itself. To speak concretely, the various parts reveal sometimes little to connect them with each other; they seem little amenable to any formal scheme. But when the listener simply listens, without trying to apply mental standards, he finds that he has lived through a single and definite *experience*.

It is hard to speak in detail of Debussy's songs. They present so many individual elements of interest that, if they are to be studied at all, they must be studied in the concrete. Any attempt to describe or characterize them at a distance must be vague and colorless. We can only point out a few of the songs that stand out from the others by reason of great technical originality or impressionistic power. Debussy gained the *grand Prix de Rome* in 1884 and spent the next three years in Italy. His prize cantata, 'The Prodigal Son,' shows evidences of the impressionistic style, but, being offered to please a conservative committee, was kept in reserve. But Debussy knew what he wanted to do and promptly sent back from the Villa Medici a work which the committee could not accept because of its daring style. Even then he was approaching maturity in the manner which made him famous. The first of the well known songs were published in 1890 and were probably written in the course of the five years just preceding. They are not so involved as the later songs, but they cannot be called experimental works. The *Mandoline*, a masterly little genre song, has attained great popularity, and 'The Fountain' shows the composer

## DEBUSSY'S SONGS

working on a most elaborate scale with a fully developed technical method. We should also mention in this place the famous aria, 'Azaël,' from 'The Prodigal Son.' The most strongly creative of Debussy's works (exclusive of the opera) seem to centre around the year 1904. And here we find some of the best songs. We may instance the five fine 'Poems' from Baudelaire. In these Debussy is putting forth his very best. The *Harmonies du soir* may be taken as an epitome of his whole harmonic method. 'The Balcony' is very long and rich in descriptive imagination. The *Jet d'eau* and 'The Death of Lovers' should also be mentioned from this group. 'The Faun' and 'The Grotto,' from the same period, show Debussy at his best. The former in particular reveals him admirably as a painter of pictures in tones. Among the fairly simple songs (always the best for the student who is approaching a new style) we may mention *Beau soir* and the *Romance*. The *Proses lyriques* are very ambitious, very long, and very difficult. Even the most capable singer will find it hard to hold them unified when they are sung. The voice part is free, not exactly declamatory, but fragmentary and merged with the symphonic comment which is the accompaniment. Of the four *Les Fleurs* is perhaps the best, while the last, *Le soir*, is the simplest and the most approachable. The *Chansons de Bilitis* are more emotional and not so good. But the three 'Ballads of François Villon,' published in 1910, are masterpieces. The Prayer to the Virgin Mary is admirably pathetic, and the third, 'The Ladies of Paris,' shows Debussy in his sprightly vein, which he manages with capital humor and verve. The *Fêtes galantes* (words by Verlaine) include two very typical songs, *En Sourdine* and *Clair de lune*; the second extremely successful in the creating of 'atmosphere' and the first unusually appealing in melody. Finally we may mention the *Ariettes oubliées*, published in 1913, which include

## THE VOICE AND VOCAL MUSIC

one admirable song, the 'Belgian Landscape,' which is clear and picturesque.

Maurice Ravel (born 1875) has a more vital talent than Debussy. Though the idiom he uses is remarkably similar, he manipulates it with greater incisiveness of effect and hence can make it expressive of emotion and physical energy to a greater extent. Where Debussy avoids the harsh and crude, Ravel often delights in it. Moreover, of late years, he has shown a marked change in his style (which cannot be said of Debussy). For, while the radical French music of the nineties was preëminently harmonic (insisting on the absolute effect of strange chords for its effect), Ravel has made his increasingly polyphonic. This he seems to have got from the Russian, Stravinsky. Undoubtedly this is a more vigorous method and especially one which is capable of a longer life and more variety of expression. And with it Ravel has accomplished fine things. The new French school, which with Debussy seemed in danger of degenerating into meticulous preciousness, will surely not see its energy exhausted at Ravel's hands.

Perhaps most typical of Ravel's songs, and admirably representative of his earlier technique, are the five descriptive songs grouped under the title *Histoires naturelles*. The animals here described with inimitable humor are respectively the peacock, the cricket, the swan, the king-fisher, and the guinea fowl. It is evident that these offer a wide variety of effect. In each case Ravel has seized the opportunity in masterly fashion. The accompaniment to 'The Peacock' fairly shimmers with gorgeous coloring. 'The Cricket' is strident and mechanical, 'The Swan' slow and sensuous, and so on. Perhaps the student may not find such subjects proper for song treatment. But if descriptive music is admitted at all in song writing, one must admit the fine and supple technique displayed in these extraordinarily

## MAURICE RAVEL

successful songs. The group entitled 'Scheherezade' is no less masterful in its description of scenery and moods. The first, called 'Asia,' is unbelievably rich in this respect. Finally we may mention the three poems from Mallarmé, published in 1914. These are the most elaborate and difficult, the most remote from conventional expression of anything Ravel has done. They are more solid and stimulating in their musicianship than anything he had done before. The irregular melodic line of *Placet futile* is luxuriant in the extreme. All three show a gain toward freedom in the management of the voice, a gain which means a great increase in absolute musical value for the voice part. He seems here even to be creating a new sort of melody, one which has few elements of formal regularity but is rich in sensuous loveliness. The accompaniments for these songs are elaborate in the extreme. What the ultimate artistic value of them will be can not be told until they have been generously tried out by experienced singers. But they certainly give the musician pause. They, along with certain recent orchestral works, prove that Ravel is a man of immense energy, of an artistic genius that cannot be curbed, altogether one of the important men in modern music.

## CHAPTER XV

### MODERN LYRICISTS OUTSIDE OF GERMANY AND FRANCE

The new Russian school: Balakireff, etc.; Moussorgsky and others—The Scandinavians and Finns—Recent English song-writers.

WE have referred in another chapter to the neo-Russian school of composers, who worked under the influence of Mily Balakireff and based their composition largely upon the native folk-songs. It is this group that has created Russia's musical art. Tschaikowsky and Rubinstein are, in the Russian view, out of the direct line of succession. In the direct line, which commences with Glinka, we find a distinguished company of geniuses. After Glinka comes Alexander Dargomij-sky (1813-1869), one of the earliest converts to Wagnerian principles outside of Germany and a radical innovator in dramatic and harmonic method. His opera, 'The Stone Guest,' looks forward a quarter of a century to modern harmonic effects, whole-toned scale and all. But, in consideration of the time he was working, it is not to be expected that his songs are of a radical cast. They, however, show the innovating genius of the man and his full-blooded artistic life. Some ninety in all, they are extraordinarily varied in style and contents, some graceful and elegaic, some exotic, and some humorous. Dargomijsky took the traditional mantle of Russian genius upon his shoulders in satirizing the bureaucracy and wrote some of his finest humorous songs on the subject. Among the best of his songs we may mention 'An Eastern Song,' 'I Think that Thou Wert Born for This,' and 'O Maid, My Rose.' His dramatic ballads, of which 'The Knight Errant' and

**Famous Song Interpreters:**

**Julia Culp  
Ludwig Wüllner**

**Elena Gerhardt  
David Bispham**









## THE NEW RUSSIAN SCHOOL

'The Old Corporal' are the finest, are marked by directness and simplicity which give them a rare laconic force.

Dargomijsky was one of the older generation, a sort of father confessor to the neo-Russian group. This group worked under the inspiration of Mily Balakireff (1837-1910), a young enthusiast with fine visions and a considerable knowledge of music, mostly self-learned. It was he who first of all gave the great emphasis to the use of folk-songs in Russian composition and this he made the cornerstone of the new school. As members of his little group he was lucky enough to have two geniuses of very nearly the first order, one Modest Moussorgsky (1835-1881) and the other Nicholas Rimsky-Korsakoff (1844-1908). Balakireff's own songs show artistic qualities of a high order; they are marked by unfailing taste and proportion and range over a broad field of expression, nearly everywhere successfully. But, though his artistic and critical sense was superb, he had not the creativeness of most of the group. One man who has done much finer work in song than he is Alexander Borodine (1834-1887). Borodine entered the neo-Russian group as a mere amateur, but he became filled with the new enthusiasms and set himself to work in earnest. The high and consistent creative level of his work, considering his short and interrupted study and the smallness of his output, is amazing. He wrote some twelve songs in his lifetime and fully half of them are masterpieces. Borodine was courageous in his attitude toward new musical principles and extremely happy in his use of the new materials. Expressive dissonance, in particular, he uses with rare effectiveness. The ballad or romance entitled 'The Sleeping Princess' is surely one of the finest things of its kind in existence. The spell of the enchanted forest, the calm beauty of the sleeping princess, are suggested in a succession of major second dissonances

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which weave a web over the mysterious melodies of the accompaniment. The same power of creating 'atmosphere' with simple means is shown in 'The Sea-Queen,' which is an exquisite inspiration. The romance, 'A Dissonance,' is a gem of concentrated lyricism. But the most original of Borodine's songs, one of the most memorable of the whole Russian product, is 'The Song of the Dark Forest.'\* This is written purely in the Russian idiom, with a great and savage melody which is irresistible in its vigor. The accompaniment only duplicates the voice part, with the addition of dissonances that sound forth like trumpet blasts. With his handful of songs and his definite quantity of genius Borodine has made a place for himself in the history of lyric music.

César Cui (born 1835), who was in early years the press agent of the neo-Russian group, need be mentioned here only to be passed over. His song output is generous and nearly always marked with much grace and good taste. But Cui took less stock in the adoration of the folk-song than the other members of the group and his art product is in every way weaker. Rimsky-Korsakoff combined an intense feeling for the native Russian idiom with an exhaustive knowledge of the technique of music and produced a large number of works which, while being truly Russian, seem not unnatural to western ears. He is shown in romantic vein in two early songs, 'On the Georgian Hills' and 'A Southern Night.' His oriental songs are perhaps the best known of his lyric works. In these the greatest modern master of musical exoticism has brought vividly to our ears not only the phrases, but the very spirit of the east. The 'Hebrew Love Song' may be taken as one of the best of the group. But the greatest of the neo-Russian group, the greatest Russian composer hitherto, and one of the great com-

\* See Musical examples, Volume XIV.

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posers of all musical history, was Moussorgsky. This man was utterly absorbed in the Russian folk-song and based his style on nothing else. He had the faculty of genius which goes straight to the heart of something new and produces his result without seeming effort. Few musicians of the nineteenth century have spoken with so individual a voice. The world is only beginning to appreciate the greatness of his operas. As for his songs, they have made their way even more slowly, but where they are once known they are never forgotten. Moussorgsky's many remarkable qualities are not to be set down in a single paragraph like the present. Suffice it to point out his harmonic originality, which made use of atmospheric chords, unusual scale combinations, and powerful modulation long before Debussy's time (Debussy, in fact, confesses to have learned much from Moussorgsky); his freshness of inspiration, which has produced some of the most glorious of melodies; and his unsurpassed ability in the delineation of character and mood. His songs are not a great many, but there are few of them that are not masterpieces. His pictures of peasant life are marvellous in their persuasive picturesqueness. As an example we may quote the 'Peasant Cradle Song,' one of the greatest of songs anywhere. The ineffable pathos of the beginning, the strange ethereal light of the end, are hardly to be paralleled in the whole range of song. But it is more than a mere lullaby; it is a peasant's lullaby and the music almost makes us see the poor hut in which the mother croons her song. Another lullaby, the 'Cradle Song of the Poor,' is hardly less appealing, but is totally different in design. Another song showing Moussorgsky's highest genius is the *Hopak*, a long piece with admirable picturing of various phases of Russian character. The song is tremendously effective in concert.

Moussorgsky's three song groups are all of the highest rank. In the Nursery Songs he has done what

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no other composer has ever done better, and not more than two or three have done so well. He has depicted the events and emotions of a child with the simplicity of spirit of a child. The songs, however, are not simple technically—so much the contrary that, composed in 1868 to 1870, they are prophetic of future musical procedure. This freedom and delicacy of delineation had never been seen in songs before. The four 'Death Dances' are tremendous songs of grim tragedy; in 'Death and the Peasant' the accompaniment depicts the indifference of nature at the fate of the peasant who is dying in the snow after a debauch. The most amazing product of Moussorgsky's lyrical genius, however, is his last group of six songs—'Where No Sun Shines.' These, written in the later years of his life, under the influence of the deepest pessimism, are perhaps the most intense expression of spiritual despair in all song literature. The extraordinary technical method of these pieces, hardly less than that of the remarkable children's songs, was Debussy's chief guiding light in the early years of the development of his style. In absolute musical value these six last songs stand very high and 'By the Water' has few parallels in song literature.

The remaining Russian song writers can be summed up briefly. Antony Arensky (born 1861) is the composer of many songs, graceful and pleasing but not highly original in style. Sergius Taneev (born 1856) inclines to the conservative and classical, but is an able musician and capable song-writer. Alexander Glazounoff (born 1865) has worked with most success in the smaller forms and in his graceful songs has put much that is charming, though little that is genuinely inspiring. His work is marked by its extraordinary suavity and taste. Michael Ippolitoff-Ivanoff (born 1859) has composed some ninety songs, distinguished by a straightforward honesty of method and healthfulness

## SCANDINAVIANS AND FINNS

of feeling. Sergei Rachmaninoff (born 1873) is a much greater man than those we have just named and a masterful song-writer. He is not always, however, writing in the strenuous eastern idiom. 'Before My Garden' and 'Lilacs' are excellent in the conventional way. But he has written at least one truly great song of genuine Russian inspiration. This is 'Oh, Thou Billowy Harvest Fields,' which deserves to rank with Borodine's 'Song of the Black Forest' in daring and stark power.

### II

Since the time of Grieg, song writing in Scandinavia has flourished. The chief Norwegian exponent of the art is Christian Sinding (born 1856), a hardworking and sincere artist, with occasional flashes of something near genius. His many songs include settings and adaptations of Norwegian folk-songs, which he has handled with rare taste. He has put something of their directness into his own art, for he is one of the best of the modern song-writers in his power of getting the nub of an emotion in a few notes. His song product is uneven, for much of his work has been hurried and routine in quality. But there are many pieces of superior character and these reveal a quality which is above all things lyrical.

Emil Sjögren (born 1853) is probably the foremost song writer of Sweden. He is not a man of power. His range of expression is limited to the graceful and tender. Much of his work is of the second order. But very often he produces lyrics of quite original beauty. Among these we may mention *Du schaust mich an*, *Jahrlang möcht' ich*, and *Ich möchte schweben*. The second, in particular, should prove highly effective in concert. Of recent years Sjögren has cultivated the new harmonic style with much industry and acquisitive talent. He has, in fact, changed his style completely. It



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is doubtful if he can be said to be wholly successful in his metamorphosis. He seems over-concerned with details and fails to attain cogency of form.

Jean Sibelius (born 1865) is the greatest of Finnish composers and is rapidly coming to be recognized as one of the greatest in the world. We must remember that the Finns are dominantly Teutonic, and that culture has been Teutonic in the past and not Russian or Mongolian as is sometimes supposed. But Sibelius has developed a marvellous individuality of expression which is at once expressive of him and of his nation. Some of his songs are epoch-making in their form and method. In the more graceful lyrical mood Sibelius is often charming. We may mention 'Idle Wishes' and 'Oh, Wert Thou Here' as of this class. In the simple folk-style Sibelius is even more individual. 'A Little Flower Stood on the Wayside' is a thing of remarkable tenderness and beauty. But it is when Sibelius strikes his national idiom that he is at his greatest. This idiom is characterized by long, slowly-moving, angular phrases, with frequent repetitions of the same note. The style is admirably presented in the long song 'To Frigge.' The accompaniment is scarcely less simple than the voice part, yet it is truly delineative. The song is a model of pure genius creating something quite new and very beautiful out of materials so simple that they have been left by the wayside as useless. *Des Fahrmanns Bräute* is a very long ballad of great strength. But Sibelius is at his greatest and most original in the 'Autumn Evening,' a song which has no fellow anywhere. Sibelius's method here is unique. The song is almost recitative, but the various irregular phrases of the voice have an incisive quality which makes them rank as descriptive. The accompaniment is little more than a chord support at most points, but now and then rises into great delineative power. The method is one of selection until only the essentials

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remain. Each unit of expression which Sibelius has here used is ideally fitted for its purpose. Moreover, the song, though free in the extreme, has a close structure which is entirely convincing. The originality of this song should ultimately make a deep impression on current song-writing.

### III

In latter-day England song-writing has risen to a dignity and importance which it had not possessed since the time of Purcell. With Arthur Goring-Thomas, whom we have already mentioned, a new note of artistic sincerity entered the art. This was continued by an unusually talented man, Arthur Somervell (born 1863), who has composed some of the best song cycles of recent times. Somervell is by no means a radical in his method. But his lyric sense is keen and his invention fertile. His cycle from Tennyson's 'Maud' attains rare fidelity and tragic intensity. Among his other numerous songs are the two cycles, 'A Shropshire Lad' and 'James Lee's Wife,' the latter scored for orchestral accompaniment. These both show his happy invention and his high musicianship. A song-writer who has gained a much more glittering reputation less deservedly is Edward Elgar, whom people regard for some reason as the chief representative of modern English song. As a matter of fact, Elgar's song output has been slight and has not pretended to show the best he was capable of (as Reger did attempt to show in *his* songs). There is little of Elgar's forceful musicianship which comes across to us in these songs. The 'Sea Pictures' have made their effect chiefly through the effective orchestration which their composer provided for them. Considered as independent music, they are inferior and somewhat conventional. The best is probably 'Where Coral Lies.' 'The Swimmer' will serve to

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suggest Elgar's descriptive style. The conventional, in fact, hangs over most of Elgar's songs. The one which notably escapes it is the beautiful lyric, 'My Love Lives in a Northern Land,' which is worthy to be signed by a first-class musician. Of the others we may mention 'Queen Mary's Song,' which, with its accompaniment in imitation of a lute, is effective in concert; 'Through the Long Days,' 'The Shepherd's Song,' and 'The Pipes of Pan.'

Granville Bantock (born 1868) may justly be called a radical modern composer, whereas Elgar has much of the classical reserve about him. Bantock's very great ability and learning sometimes produce rather chaotic results, the more so because his output is unusually great. But frequently it produces results that are altogether admirable. To singers he is known chiefly through his 'Songs of the East.' These are published as cycles, as follows: Songs of Egypt, Songs of India, Songs of Persia, Songs of the Seraglio, Five 'Ghazels of Hafiz,' lyrics from 'Ferishtah's Fancies,' Songs of China, and Songs of Japan. The exoticism of these many songs is rarely genuine and Bantock's facile technique extends over them all to make them seem rather too much alike for the good of his reputation. But the *effect* of exoticism is frequently attained with rare skill and the musical standard is kept far higher than is usual in this class of music. Bantock's powerful technique, which is obviously influenced by Richard Strauss, is to be studied to advantage in many of these songs, especially the more pretentious ones. From the Songs of Egypt we should mention the majestic 'Invocation to the Nile,' the mystical song 'The Unutterable'; and the poignant 'Lament of Isis.' Of the Hindoo songs that of the Nautch girl is ever memorable for its effect of fierce physical motion. The songs from Persia include two of high quality, the 'Drinking Song' and the 'Hymn of the Ghebers.' Let us further pick out, as

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among the best, the Persian Love Song from the 'Songs of the Seraglio'; and the 'Shah Abbas' and 'Mahirab Shah' from 'Ferishtah's Fancies,' the last remarkable for its expression of physical pain. The songs of China and Japan are in no way unusual. Nor are the six Jester Songs, though they sometimes catch the joy of life in engaging fashion. But Bantock has one very ambitious work, the cycle of fragments from Sappho, which is sufficient to put him in the front rank. It is hard to describe the richness of the technique he has lavished on this work. We should find it difficult to name anything similar to it in its peculiar emotional intensity. The best that Bantock has to show of his art (his instrumentation aside) is all to be found in this remarkable group of songs. Every one of them is admirable, as is also the very long introduction. But one remembers especially the opening number, the 'Hymn to Aprodite,' dramatic and passionate; the painfully beautiful song, 'The Moon Has Set'; the masterful description of 'Peer of the Gods'; and the profuse musical richness of 'In a Dream I Spake.' Possibly these songs will in later years be judged too pretentious. But while the judgment is still unmade we must regard with the highest respect the musician who has done this thing in the musical conditions that have prevailed in England.

It only remains to speak of the most radical of the young English composers, Cyril Scott (born 1874). He broke away completely from the traditional English style, founded on conventional church music, and embraced the 'atmospheric' manner of the modern Frenchmen. In this style he has displayed great energy and no small amount of inventiveness. It remains to be seen whether he can make his influence permanently felt in music. His songs well exemplify the general style of his music. The best are 'Lovely Kind and Kindly Loving' and 'Why so Pale and Wan,' both from opus 55. Others which should be mentioned are 'My Cap-

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tain' (to Walt Whitman's words), 'A Reflection,' and 'Afterday.' The song writing of the modern English school has not yet gathered body. It is only beginning to make itself felt beyond the seas. But it has already shown so much vigor and independence that we may justly look for abundant and fine results from it.

## APPENDIX

### THE FRENCH-CANADIAN FOLK-SONG

THE songs of the French Canadians, which show considerable originality, are in part transplanted from France, modified and localized in the natural course of popular music. But a considerable part are indigenous, with a history dating back, possibly, more than two centuries. They are all, of course, made in imitation of the parent stock, but in many instances they have taken on a new character, befitting the wild and uncouth environment in which they were composed. In some instances they show model characteristics, as in the *Mon Cri Cra, Tir' la Liretta*, sung by the boatmen on the Red River. This old song shows scarcely any traces of the omnipresent influence of the court of Louis XIV. Other songs bear the marks of the French priests, through whose hands they passed on their way to the Canadian natives, Indians or Frenchmen. Such a song is *Jesos Ahatonhia*, the music of which was evidently an ecclesiastical melody with a strong modal character indicating its great age. But on the whole the refined and graceful influence of French civilization is strongly marked in the Canadian songs, even when these songs originated in the New World. The one department in which they are supreme is that of playful humor—not the humor of the old English songs, which is somewhat bumptious and muscular, but a more delicate humor, into which the singer enters from pure effervescence of human sym-

## APPENDIX

pathy and childlike playfulness. We must range a long way through folk-song literature before we find a song of this sort to equal 'The White Duck,' or 'I Hear a Mill Go Tick-Tack.' A provocative playfulness sings in the words of 'My Faithful Bottle,' 'The Lost Chance,' and the inimitable 'When Returning from Varennes,' with its continuous refrain, *Cach'ton joli bas de laine*. The spirit of Gascony, famous home of the practical joke, is in the 'Song of Lies,' in which the singer turns the world topsy-turvy and hopes to be hung if a single word he says is true. The sentimental note is not so often struck, but we find it charmingly in such occasional songs as 'The Traveller's Return,' and 'From Yonder on the Mountains.'

Gagnon's collection, made in 1865 (the earliest of all), contains a number of gentle and lovely airs, such as *C'est la belle française*. We may also notice in this book a number which have been transported from France and forgotten in the home country while they lived and flourished under their foster mother. Such a song is *Dans les Prisons de Nantes. Mon Per' n'avait fille que moi* is one of the most interesting examples of the old modal style. The Canadian songs are peculiarly addicted to the use of the refrain. This device, which is always a mark of unsophisticated playfulness, is relied upon to such an extent that one would call it excessive if the high spirits of the music and words did not carry the little game through to complete success. As so often happens, the refrain frequently has nothing whatever to do with the sense of the text. The primitive innocence of the mind is absolutely demanded of any singer who attempts, for instance, 'The White Duck.' On the whole, the Canadian songs, though very limited in range, can show a few types of folk-expression managed with such consummate art that they deserve a place in the folk-literature of the world.

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